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The Consistency of Characteristics of Effective and Ineffective Charter Schools in North Carolina (Quasi-Experimental Design)

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the North Carolina charter schools. The variables were chosen based on the researcher's inference from literature reviews discussing common factors from qualitative charter school studies. The indicators used to determine if charter schools could be categorized as effective or ineffective were: 1) attendance rates, 2) short suspensions, 3) student-teacher ratio, 4) teacher quality, 5) Reading NCE, and 6) Math NCE scores. Charter schools were determined to be effective if they were "1" standard deviation point above average for Reading NCE and Math NCE scores. Charter schools were determined to be ineffective if they were "1" standard deviation point below average for Reading NCE and Math NCE scores. The data collected for this study was ex-post facto data from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) website using the academic school year 2008-09. The data was coded and entered SPSS creating a quantitative output to be analyzed and interpreted. The quantitative output determined that there were a total of 12 ineffective charter schools and 10 effective charter schools. The results indicated that no charter schools in North Carolina were affiliated with a traditional school district. Also, the dependent variables, attendance rate, and teacher quality were determined to be statistically significant in determining the effectiveness of a charter school in North Carolina. The other variables were determined to be insignificant in determining the effectiveness of charter schools in North Carolina.

Keywords

Attendance Rate, Suspension Rate, Student/Teacher Ratio, Teacher Quality, Charter School

1. Introduction and Background

The traditional school system has created a major educational disadvantage for minorities' pursuing educational attainment. Since the post-slavery era, the traditional school system has manipulated inequality and imbalance of educational standards and practices aimed at minority students. The birth of Charter schools in the early 1990s created a viable option to the traditional school system for minorities seeking a better quality of education. Skepticism followed the inception of charter schools, and skepticism followed. Critics have questioned whether charter schools are effective. The purpose of this study was to examine the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina. Following the introductory chapter, Chapter Two of the study includes a review of prior research literature on effective and ineffective charter schools, effective and ineffective, as well as a comparison of Charter schools and Traditional School Systems.

1.1. Purpose Statement, Research Question, Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations, Review of the Literature

Purpose Statement

Since the creation of charter schools, there have been mixed emotions concerning the direction and their effectiveness. The mixed emotions are closely split down the middle between proponents and opponents. Charter schools are weighing in at both ends of the scale, effective and ineffective. The problem examined in this study addressed the lack of information about the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina. The administration in the State Department of Education North Carolina desires to create consistency of high-quality education in charter schools.

Research Question and Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesizes that there is a strong consistency of characteristics between effective and ineffective charter schools in the state of North Carolina. The following research questions will be addressed by the study:

1) Is there a difference between effective and ineffective charter schools, when evaluating the variables of: attendance rate, short suspension rate, student-teacher ratio, and teacher quality?

2) What are the significant predictors of an effective charter school?

Hypothesis

H0: There is no difference in Attendance Rates between concluded ineffective charter schools.

H1: There is a difference statistical between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H0: There is no difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H2: There is a difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H0: There is no difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H3: There is a difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools.

Assumptions

The researcher assumes that the data collected from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCPDI) public website is correct. The researcher has opted not to use a survey to collect additional data based on the assumption that the NCDPI website contains ex-post facto data on all the variables of the study except for the parent involvement variable. The main purpose of the survey was to collect data for the missing variable parent involvement. After further consideration, it was determined that the ex-post facto data on the variables from the NCDPI website were sufficient to provide the researcher with an indication of success. A quantitative analysis determined whether the charter schools would be effective or ineffective. Finally, the researcher assumes that the policymakers in the state of North Carolina and the National Education department will show interest in the findings and recommendations in this study.

Limitations

In this research study, limitations include constraints regarding potential weaknesses and challenges. There is limited information on the distinction between effective and ineffective charter schools. The sample size was reduced from 98 to 89 after data was entered into SPSS for analysis. The reduction was due to the researcher removing the high school data because the students were measured by End of Course (EOC) and not End of Grade (EOG).

Delimitations

The study has the following delimitations. The researcher has restricted his study to include only elementary and middle school charter schools in the state of North Carolina. The study excludes data between the bottom 12 and the top 10 charter schools from interpretation and analysis.

Review of the Literature

A charter is based on a performance contract between a school and the state where it is located. The contract specifies the requirements and policies that the schools must adhere to, including, but not limited to school operation, enrollment, duration of a charter, facilities, teacher licensing, transportation, reporting requirements, student discipline, and grounds for termination. Charter schools, free to the students who attend them, are deregulated public schools with open enrollment. Charter schools receive funding from taxpayers' dollars allocated for public education. Charter school funding is based on the school's student enrollment. Federal legislation states that charter schools are eligible for grants, to help with start-up costs (Innovation in Education, 2009). Charter school administrators have the power to make decisions about their day-to-day management, as well as the instructional methods that best suit the needs of their students (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). Charter school administrators are free to le-

verage their resources and needs in the community allowing creativity in meeting their financial bottom line (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004).

1.2. Traditional School Failures and the Continuing Search for Reform

National School Reform and the gap in opportunity

The inequality wedge for an educational opportunity was driven deeper in the student treatment gap due to the issues of segregation prior to the ruling of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (Wikimedia Foundation, 2022). The student treatment gap moment was slowed but not eradicated by the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education*. The researcher believes that *Brown v. Board of Education* was the first movement in the direction of an educational reform policy from the U.S. Government derived from the U.S. Supreme Court (1954) ruling.

During the post-slavery years, an epidemic of racial segregation ensued. The policy of segregation was endorsed by the United Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) which ruled that if the separate facilities for separate races were "equal", then segregation did not violate the 14th Amendment which states "No state shall deny to any person the equal protection of the laws." The first challenge to the U.S. Supreme court ruling came when a class action lawsuit was filed against the Board of Education for the city of Topeka, Kansas in the U.S. District Court for the District of Kansas (1951). *Oliver Brown* et al. *v. The Board of Education of Topeka* (347 U.S. 483 1954) requested the school districts to reverse their policy on racial segregation. Topeka, Kansas's Board of Education operated under an 1879 Kansas law, which permitted, but did not require, communities with a population over 15,000 to segregated elementary schools. During that period, communities were pro-segregation of students in the school system. There were a few states that remained against the segregation policy. The District Court was provided with compelling evidence that segregation in public education had a detrimental effect on Negro children. The judges believed that the schools in Topeka, Kansas were equal with respect to building, transportation, curricular, and educational qualifications of teachers (Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Shawnee County, Kansas et, al. Opinion - 98 F. Supp. 797. 1951). The district court ruled in favor of the Board of Education citing a precedent case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S 537 (1896), which stated that "separate but equal" railway cars for Black people and whites were acceptable.

Brown v. Board of Education was later overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court (1954) (Wikimedia Foundation, 2022). The decision was a unanimous ruling in the landmark, civil rights case, which stated that "state-sanctioned segregation of public schools was a violation of the 14th amendment and therefore was unconstitutional". In the "Brown II" case the U.S. District Court ordered the district courts to carry out the desegregation policy with "deliberate speed". The vague wording allowed the local courts to conveniently desegregate; in one example, the U.S. District Court ruled that Prince Edward County, Virginia did not have to

desegregate immediately. There was great opposition to the U.S. Supreme Court decision; some government officials were so brazen, that they blocked the doorway as Black students were trying to integrate all-White schools; some officials decided to close schools as opposed to integrating them; districts used state monies to fund segregated "private schools"; and they selected "token" students, allowing selected black students to attend former white schools. The schools would be integrated through slow process years and decades later. The researcher believes that *Brown v. Board of Education* was the first National School Reform policy. Roughly over forty years later another school reform policy, the No Child Left Behind Act, was interjected into policy during the Bush Administration.

The Charter Schools Program (CSP) was authorized in October 1994, under Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended 20 U.S.C. s061-8067. The program was amended in October 1998 by the Charter School Expansion Act of 1998 and in January 2001 by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2004). Another school reform was the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2001), which was an amendment to the National Education Statistics Act of 1994. The NCLB policy was enacted into public law on Jan 8, 2002, as Public Law 107 - 110 by the 107th Congress. The government has defined the NCLB Act as "To close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (*No Child Left Behind Act of 2002: An Overview*, 2017). Several purposes of the NCLB Act exist to improve the academic achievement for all children, even those that are economically disadvantaged; to provide the schools with more flexibility in how they use their federal education funds; to increase the preparation, training, and recruitment of highly qualified teachers and principals; increase the accountability of the teachers and principals and provide a parent with the choice to send their child to better performing and safe schools within their school district. Nationally 16,120 school districts across the country exist; 100,809 schools and 52,745 Title I schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). NCLB has several shortcomings that need to be overcome before the Act can be considered a successful reform.

Opponents of NCLB feel that the very children that were meant to benefit from the emergence of the NCLB Act (2001) are the very ones that are being placed in harm's way with the continued progress of the educational reform. The NCLB reform policy has several flaws in its design: 1) The 2005 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading scores have been unchanged from 2002 to 2005 at grade 4 yet show a dramatic decline at grade 8 for Black people and Hispanics. Math scores increased at faster rates in the 1990s when NCLB when the high stakes exams for elementary and middle schools were put in place (No Child Left, 2005). Dr. Monty Neill, co-director of the National Center for Fair & Open Testing, has responded to the 2005 NAEP report stating "The drill and kill curriculum that accompanies high stakes, one size fits all testing programs under-

mines rather than improves the quality of education", 2) The NCLB is labeling many schools as failing even though they are making admirable progress, 3) NCLB calls for 100 percent of teachers to be 'highly qualified' however the Education Department reports that no state met that requirement during the 2005 school year, 4) McKenzie (2006) suggests that the state department of education has been "Gaming the System" by adopting easier test and lowering standards, creating a false impression of progress, 5) School systems are narrowing their focus by concentrating on Reading and Math overlooking the need for a well-rounded education, 6) Test scores from the affluent and suburban schools were submitted before the scores from the disadvantaged minorities were included, 7) As teachers try to meet the testing requirements of the NCLB act they are spending more time on test preparation and less time on instruction. Students are spending less time learning and less time improving. McKenzie (2006) states "In a decade offering exciting social and economic prospects, NCLB has locked American schools in an iron maiden or chastity belt. At the very time we should be exploring human potential, we have lowered standards, killed motivation, stifled creativity, and lost ground. The best thinkers and best thoughts have been stilled while the merchants of mediocrity have been given the stage and the joystick."

The purpose of the NCLB Act has fallen short and its very existence is being questioned; the school administrators should either rejuvenate or replace the Act with a more feasible educational reform. In a personal interview with Richardson (2009) of Phi Delta Kappan, with the current Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan stated "I think they got this one fundamentally backward. NCLB was very, very loose on the goals. So, there are 50 different goal posts, 50 different measurements at the State level". Schools that were improving year after year were labeled as failures by the NCLB act. Schools that were struggling did not receive the appropriate assistance and schools at the bottom of the educational food chain received marginal assistance. Since education is a major focus of the current administration, President Obama and his administration have created their own counter to the shortcomings of the NCLB Act.

The Secretary of Education suggested four "Turnaround Models" for those low-performing schools. The first model, "Students stay, and adults leave" suggests that new principals and lead teachers collaborate on the curriculum for students in conjunction with the recruitment of teachers in the spring in preparation for a June takeover. Teachers are encouraged to reapply although all will not be rehired. The second model suggests, "Replace the staff and turn the school over to a charter or management organization" for operation. Duncan recommends several management organizations; the Green Dot Public Schools, a nonprofit school management organization that has opened 18 public charter schools in Los Angeles (District Administration, 2009), Mastery Charter Schools, or the Green Dot Public Schools. The third model, "Keep the staff but drastically change the school culture", suggests holding the staff accountable through ri-

gorous performance evaluations; increasing the level of support, training, and teacher mentoring; strengthening the curriculum and instructional programs as well as increasing student learning outside of the regular school hours. The final model, "Everyone goes", suggests that schools that are underperforming should close which, is at the discretion of the state and local level administrations. Once the schools are closed, students should re-enroll in better-performing schools. President Obama created the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) which offered funds to states with an aggressive educational reform program.

President Obama and his regime created the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, which contains a major focus on the National Education Reform. The ARRA of 2009 was enacted into law on February 17, 2009, by President Obama. The purpose of the ARRA of 2009 is to jumpstart the economy, create or save millions of jobs, and give the U.S. competitive advantage in the 21st century. The ARRA of 2009 is designed to increase the modernization of the U.S. infrastructure, increase the U.S. energy independence, expand educational opportunities, preserve, and improve affordable health care, provide tax relief, and protect those with the greatest of need. The Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan believed that President Obama had an aggressive but achievable Education Reform plan. President Obama's educational plan called for the U.S. to have the largest percentage of graduates in the world by 2020. The Secretary of Education believed the U.S. can achieve this goal by creating educational opportunities, decreasing the dropout rates, increasing graduation rates, and ensuring the students who graduate are prepared for a successful college career. Duncan believed that to have a world-class school system, you need a world class supporting city: the business community, the philanthropic community, religious community, not-for-profits, parks and recreation, and health and human services supporting your educational goals. The ARRA of 2009 authorized the "Race to the Top Assessment Program" for states with an aggressive educational reform plan.

According to the U.S. Government Website (2010), The Race to the Top Assessment Program (RTAP) provides funding to consortia of states to develop assessments that are valid, support and inform instruction, provide accurate information about what students know and can do, and measure student achievement against standards designed to ensure that all students gain the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in college and the workplace. These assessments were intended to play a critical role in educational systems: provide administrators, educators, parents, and students with the data and information needed to continuously improve teaching and learning; and help meet the President's goal of restoring, by 2020, the nation's position as the world leader in college graduates (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). RTAP had two major competitive grants awarded by the Department of Education to consortia of states.

RTAP participants had to submit a notice to apply by April 29, 2010. The applications were due June 23, 2010: winners will be announced in September

2010. There are two categories of grants for the "Race to the Top Assessment Program": 1) Comprehensive Assessment Systems (CAS) grants; 2) High School Course Assessment Programs (HSCAP) grants. The CAS grants have a dual purpose to meet the needs for accountability and instructional improvement. States must create "needs assessment systems" which are based on standards designed to prepare students for college and the workplace. The assessments measured a student's knowledge and skills which reflect good instructional practices and support a culture of continuous improvement in education. The HSCAP grant required states to create rigorous high school courses using a well-rounded curriculum. Currently, the school systems lack rigorous courses offered which in many cases, is not sufficient to prepare students for a successful college career. According to the US Government (2010), The Race to the Top Assessment program required states to advance educational reforms around four central areas:

1) Create standards and assessments that prepare students to succeed in college and the workplace and to compete in the global economy.

2) Build data systems that measure student growth and success and inform teachers and principals about how they can improve instructions.

3) Recruiting, developing, rewarding, and retaining effective teachers and principals, especially where they are needed most.

4) Turning around the lowest-achieving schools.

Awards in the RTAP went to states that lead the way with ambitious yet achievable plans for implementing coherent, compelling, and comprehensive education reform (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). States that were the recipients of the RTAP grants became trailblazers with effective educational reforms, which will set the benchmark for other states and local school districts to follow. North Carolina's school reform policy included schools of choice.

North Carolina Charter School Reform

According to the U.S. Government website (2010), the state of North Carolina has two statewide support organizations for charter schools. The two organizations are the North Carolina Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NCAPCS) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2001). "The North Carolina Alliance for Public Charter Schools is a group of public charter schools and community leaders from around the state, working on behalf of the charter school movement in North Carolina" (U.S. Charter Schools, 2009). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction states, "The Department maintains a charter schools page which provides a number of resources, including a directory of charter schools, extensive application information, a sample application, and numerous other resources" (U.S. Charter Schools, 2010). Charter schools are another form of school reform that promotes accountability, competition, and choice within the traditional school system. Charter schools have allowed local community groups, teachers, and parents to open public schools to meet their educational needs. According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2001), the 1996 Charter School Act was created as an edu-

cational reform for North Carolina's public school system. The act is intended to bring new ideas, innovations, accountability, choice, competition, and greater awareness about the quality of education (Allen & Seaman, 2004).

The Charter School Act was ratified by the North Carolina General Assembly on June 26, 1996. Thirty-four charter schools opened for the 1997-1998 school year. As of spring 2009, 98 charter schools are operating in North Carolina. Federal law, state law, and the State Board of Education's policies govern a charter school's operation. North Carolina law allows three entities to serve as authorizers of public charter schools: local school boards, the University of North Carolina, and the state Board of Education. Charter schools approved by either the local school boards or the University of North Carolina must also include approval from the state Board of Education. For all intent purposes, the board of education is the only active authorizer in the state. The North Carolina Charter Schools ACT, NCGS 115C-238.29D, states "The State Board shall authorize no more than 100 charter schools statewide which is roughly four % of the North Carolina public schools." Applications for charter schools far exceed the number of available charters.

The North Carolina charter schools have over 21,000 students in attendance statewide (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). In North Carolina, the average class size in a traditional school is 21 students; the average class size for a charter school is 15 students (Corbett & Noblit, 2001). Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district had 131,176 students in attendance during the school year of 2007-2008 which ranked the district as the second largest in the state of North Carolina (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). North Carolina charter schools spend less on salaries and benefits than other public schools and more on services and equipment used for instruction (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). "North Carolina law allows the State Board of Education to grant the initial charter for a period not to exceed 10 years and requires the State Board of Education to review the operations of each charter school at least once every five years to ensure that the school is meeting the expected academic, financial, and governance standards" (U.S. Charter Schools.org, 2010). The renewal process for charter schools is not guaranteed. The State Board of Education can terminate a charter if certain conditions are not met, such as financial mismanagement, lack of student achievement, and violations of the law or standards of the charter. North Carolina has a closure rate of 18% for charter schools. North Carolina law requires upon the nonrenewal or dissolution of the charter school that the net assets purchased with public funds shall become the property of the local school administrative unit in which the charter school is located.

The country has become dismayed with overcrowding, low test scores, and high dropout rates: parents, communities, and students desire an overhauling of the U.S. Educational system. The persistence of these reformers has led to the formulation of an alternative school system, charter schools. The charter school movement has created mixed emotions regarding charter school success. Rang-

ing from unsuccessful and not achieving the goal that the charter school system was designed to accomplish, to success in reducing the student treatment gap. The mixed reviews of the charter school movement have led to categorizing charter schools as either effective or ineffective in their efforts to reduce the student treatment gap. The authors of "Charter schools in North Carolina; Innovation in Education" have identified six major differences between charter schools and traditional schools; 1) charter schools are schools of choice; 2) parent involvement is greater in charter schools than in traditional schools; 3) Charter schools class size are typically smaller than traditional schools classes which attribute to greater individualize attention; 4) Charter schools have greater autonomy and are not constrained by the regulatory restrictions that encumber traditional public schools; 5) Charter schools concentration on subjects and curriculum can vary; 6) Charter schools save taxpayers roughly $1000 per student each year in facility cost. The North Carolina charter schools tend to serve more male students than traditional schools, 55% verse 51%. Also, charter schools tend to have a slightly higher percentage of special education children since the students are not well served by their assigned public schools (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). The existence of charter schools has inserted a certain level of competition into the traditional school system. Researchers have found that charter school competition in North Carolina increased traditional school performance by about one %, more than half of the average achievement gain in 1999-2000 (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). The current Democratic Presidential administration is a major proponent of the charter school movement. The Secretary of Education believes there are three things that need to happen for charter schools to achieve success; 1) charter schools need exceedingly high bars for entry, 2) charter schools need real autonomy, and 3) the autonomy needs to be tied to real accountability. When all three criteria are achieved then the results are astounding for the children.

North Carolina Charter School Funding

One source of funding is the "Children's Scholarship Fund-Charlotte", which is a privately funded scholarship program. This scholarship fund provides tuition assistance to lower-income students in the Charlotte area. The scholarship can be used at public, private, or religious schools of choice. There are more than 400 students receiving the scholarship from 60 different providers. Depending on the residence of the parent, they may be able to claim tax credits on their state income taxes for specific education expenses. Many believe that charter schools take money away from the traditional school system because of their existence. However, funding does follow the pupil to the school they attend, whether it is a traditional school or charter school. Charter schools are entitled to and receive the same state and federal funds as traditional schools. North Carolina charter schools do not receive capital funds to offset the cost of facilities. Charter schools can receive private funds as donations.

State Law

The strength of state law has a direct bearing on the ability of its charter school to succeed: the stronger the law, the greater the student achievement. State law requires that charter schools design their programs to meet student performance standards specified by both the State Board of Education and the individual school's charter. All charter schools in North Carolina participate in ABC's Accountability Model; North Carolina's school improvement program has been in place since 1995. The ABCs measure both student performance and growth, through End of Grades exams for grades 3 through 8 and End of Course tests for grades 9 through 12 (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). Also, charter schools are measured by Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), which determines if schools are meeting performance targets for subgroups. The charter schools must achieve all their targets to meet AYP. In the state of North Carolina, charters are granted for five years.

In a report released by The North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research in 2002, the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research in their analysis of whether the state should increase the number of charter schools suggests that the state should delay its decision to increase the number of the charter. The researchers have determined that charter schools in North Carolina were tasked with six goals, of which they have only met three. The areas of success that the charter schools have achieved are: 1) giving teachers expanded professional opportunities; 2) being held accountable on performance-based tests, and 3) providing parents with expanded choice for their children's education. The center has also identified three missed opportunities that are preventing the center from endorsing the expansion of the charter school movement in North Carolina. The challenges that North Carolina Charter schools are facing: 1) academic performance that is lagging traditional public schools; 2) racial diversity because the charter schools are not complying with state law requiring charter schools' student populations to reasonably reflect the racial makeup of their local school districts; and 3) concerns regarding charter school management because poor management has contributed to the closure of at least eight charter schools.

According to Terry Stoops (Winston-Salem Journal Online, 2010), the foundation's director of education studies for the John Locke Foundation, a conservative policy-research group in Raleigh, NC, "Charter schools are already held to a higher standard than district schools." Stoops also stated that "The State Board of education shall revoke the charter of any charter school when, for two of the three consecutive school years, the charter school does not meet or exceed expected growth and has a Performance Composite below 60 percent. For purpose of this policy, the first-year test scores will be from the 2009-2010 school year." A performance composite is the percentage of test scores that meet or exceed the state's proficiency standard for such measures as end-of-grade tests (Winston-Salem Journal Online, February 26, 2010).

However, in other states, the expiration for charters is granted for three to five years. The legislative cap for charter schools in North Carolina is currently 100

charter schools statewide. According to the Ziebarth (2010), during the short Senate session for 2010 lawmakers in North Carolina decide whether to move forward with lifting the restrictive 100 charter school cap. With the phenomenal growth of the charter school movement and a desperate need for additional charter schools in North Carolina based on the 16,000-student waiting list, an attempt exists to remove the restrictive cap on the number of charter schools allowed in North Carolina. Currently, North Carolina legislation specifies that the State Board of Education can authorize a maximum of five charter schools per district per year. Some states are pioneering more aggressive plans.

Arizona has an aggressive charter school reform. There is no cap for granting charters in the state of Arizona, and the initial charter is 15 years, which allows the school time to demonstrate success. Arizona has 491 charter schools, which are five times the amount in North Carolina. Arizona, California, and Michigan combined have over 1200 charter schools, which is nearly one-third of the nation's 3000 charter schools. States with laws providing autonomy and flexibility produce the most schools (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). Minnesota has removed its cap and other states like Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming all have no legislative cap that restricts the number of charter schools.

In North Carolina, a limited number of counties have an open enrollment policy, which allows parents to specify their public-school preferences, provided they are within the borders of the residential school district (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). "North Carolina law requires charters to provide open enrollments to any students in the state" (NAPCS, 2010). Also, conversion charter schools must provide a preference to students who reside in the former attendance area of the conversion school during the admission process. In the North Carolina charter schools, the average years of teaching experience are 8.5 years. North Carolina requires that 75% of teachers in charter schools serving grades K-5, and 50% of teachers in charter schools serving grades 6 - 12, hold teaching licenses (North Carolina Education Alliance, 2004). Some states do not require certification at all. States with charter school laws are ranked based on the strength of their policy for public charter schools to succeed.

The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS) produced a report, "How State Charter Laws Rank Against the New Model Public Charter School Law," "This report looks at each individual state that has a charter school law, assesses the strengths of its law against the 20 essential components of the model law, and ranks them from 1 to 40" (Ziebarth, 2010). The NAPCS identified 20 essential components of a model law that was used to rank the states with charter school laws.

Out of a possible 208 points in the 20 essential components of the new model law, the state of North Carolina accumulated 78 points and achieved a ranking of 32 among a possible 40 states. The top 10 states with the strongest public charter laws are: 1) Minnesota, 2) District of Columbia, 3) California, 4) Geor-

gia, 5) Colorado, 6) Massachusetts, 7) Utah, 8) New York, 9) Louisiana, and 10) Arizona. The number one ranked state was Minnesota with a total of 152 points out of a possible 208 total points. Maryland ranks last in the report with a possible of 41 out of 208 total points. This was the inaugural ranking among the states with charter school laws, which support the growth of high-quality public charter schools. African American failures were reduced with the emergence of charter schools.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2009), the five largest school districts in North Carolina are: 1) Wake County schools (134,401) students, 2) Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools (131,176) students, 3) Guilford County schools (72,389) students, 4) Cumberland County schools (53,295) students, and 5) Forsyth County schools (51,738) students. The 2007-08 academic year student enrollment in the state of North Carolina for White students was 817,399 (54.9%), Black non-Hispanic was 417,547 (28%), Hispanic was 147,879 (9.9%), Asian/Pacific Islander was 34,988 (2.3%), and American Indian/Alaskan Native was 21,278 (1.4%). Blacks are failing in comparison to their White counterparts on the state assessment performance in the percent of students performing at or above proficient level for fourth grade reading (Whites 72.1, Blacks 39.4), eighth-grade reading (Whites 68.0, Blacks 32.9), high school reading (Whites 75.9, Blacks 47.5), fourth-grade mathematics (Whites 82.8, Blacks 54.2), eighth-grade mathematics (Whites 79.1, Blacks 49.6) and high school mathematics (Whites 78.1, Blacks 48.1). The dismal performance continues with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Achievement results in fourth-grade reading (Whites 39.0, Black people 12.0), eighth-grade reading (Whites 39.0, Blacks 10.0), fourth-grade math (Whites 56.0, Blacks 15.0), and eighth-grade math (Whites 46.0, Blacks 14.0). The results of the 2009 EDfacts state profile indicate that there is a huge disparity in student enrollments, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), and the State Assessment Performance.

According to Arne Duncan, 1100 schools nationwide have fallen into "restructuring," the most extreme federal designation for failure, and experience the threat of closure for underperformance under the No Child Left Behind law. The number is on track to rise to 5000 schools by 2010, representing more than 2.5 million students (District Administration, 2009). A two-year study by Mass Insight detailed that America's greatest opportunity to improve student achievement lies within its poorest performing schools. The study reviewed intervention efforts, which encompassed 10 states, four districts, and over 50 organizations. Several experts have contributed to the report's findings and recommendations for "Six Essential Characteristics of Successful Turnarounds":

Provide autonomy to authority to act accordingly on what's best for the children and learning, which includes but is not limited to staffing, scheduling, budget, and curriculum.

A relentless and aggressive approach to hiring and staff development, ensur-

ing the best possible teaching force. Diversified and highly capable and effective leadership team. Create more time in the school day and school year. Performance-based evaluations for all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents. A Better understanding of the students and academic and related psychosocial needs is supported by research-based programs and related social services.

Traditional schools are creating disparities in the student treatment gap. Rothstein (2004) believes the student treatment gap between Black and White students goes beyond the differences of class status, lower class, or middle class. There are several factors to consider when determining the cause of the disparity in the student treatment gap. Rothstein (2004) suggests there are social class differences; wrongly designed school policies, and the focus on standardized tests is too narrow. Rothstein (2004) defines the academic achievement gap as "a phenomenon of averages, a difference between the average achievement level of lower-class children and that of middle-class children." Additional traditional school failures are overcrowded class sizes; low academic achievement; attendance; and suspension rate of certain ethnic groups. Low achieving students are the product of low expectations. Low expectations can be a life sentence for these students. "Students are given less challenging work because the teachers do not believe in their academic capabilities" (House, 2005). When the students are not challenged in the classroom the results are less developed cognitive skills.

Overall, the traditional school system is falling behind in academic performance as compared to countries such as Asia and China. The Japanese and Chinese students have been outperforming the United States (U.S.) students in mathematics achievement since 1980 (Benjamin, 2006). The traditional school system in the United States has created inequalities in the academic performance between Black people and Whites. The inadequacies of traditional schools have opened the door for alternative schools to fill the void that parents, communities, and students have desired for a long time. Local level officials have created their own turnaround plan for the traditional school system.

Dr. Peter Gorman heads one of the twenty-five largest school districts in the U.S. in a city that is progressively growing, Charlotte, NC. Dr. Gorman of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools system prefers a "Strategic Staffing Initiative" to a piecemeal approach. Dr. Gorman's approach to rebuilding schools has five phases; 1) create leadership, 2) send in a team of strong educators, 3) remove anyone who does not fully support the changes being made to increase achievement, 4) ensuring and nurturing community support, and 5) maintaining support from the district office (District Administration, 2009). Dr. Gorman implemented his "Strategic Staffing Plan" in seven schools during the 2007-2008 academic school year. The results indicate that students' test scores rose for the 2008-2009 academic school year and the number of students who were proficient increased by 23%. Dr. Gorman states that "Strategic staffing is the best ap-

proach to turn a struggling school around" (District Administration, 2009).

1.3. Data on Traditional Schools in Comparison to Charter Schools

Major failures in our history of education exist, most notably the lack of equal educational opportunities for African Americans, Native Americans, women, immigrants, and those of the lower class (Nelson et al., 2006). During the 1950s, the classroom consisted of a homogenous student body, European Whites. The teacher-to-student ratio at that time was 35 to 40 students per teacher. Once the 1964 Civil Rights Act was signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, the process of integrating schools began. African Americans could now attend integrated schools as well as other social institutions and amenities. Unfortunately, educating a large population that is heterogeneous and divided by class, economics, ethnicity, culture, and religion was a challenging undertaking for our democracy (Graham, 2009). The current class size in a traditional school system ranged from 30 - 35 students and even up to 40 students in a class. One of the challenges that teachers experience is trying to educate large student bodies which are heterogeneous, divided by class, economics, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Educating young people who are culturally different sometimes requires individual attention which is difficult in an overcrowded room. A reduction in class size that is manageable is usually mandated by the state which has the power to determine or set objectives to close the existing student treatment gap (Nelson et al., 2006). Graham (2009) stated that "The Class Size Reduction Program" is a new initiative to hire additional, highly qualified teachers so that students can attend smaller classes in the crucial early grades and receive a solid foundation for learning. The drawback to this initiative is incurring the additional expense of hiring and training new teachers as well as acquiring additional classrooms to place the students. Another inadequacy of Traditional Schools is academic performance.

Overall Black people in elementary and secondary education perform better in charter schools than in traditional schools (Buddin & Zimmer, 2005). The success of the Black male is deteriorating rapidly in the traditional school classroom. Recent studies have found that Black males perform slightly better in charter schools versus traditional schools. However, the results of an exploratory study by Plucker et al. (2007) provide conflicting results to the earlier research study of Buddin & Zimmer (2005). The exploratory study, "The Impact of Charter Schools on Promoting High Levels of Mathematics Achievement" emphasized that Black people perform better in traditional schools as opposed to charter schools. While the trend was reversed for White students in traditional schools, White students performed poorer and had a higher performance in charter schools. Researchers have identified the best charter school option.

Researchers determined that start-up classroom-based charter schools provide the greatest promise of improving performance (Buddin & Zimmer, 2005). School

attendance is an important success indicator of educational achievement for Black males. Although 72% of Black students in America graduate from high school each year, over 45% of Black males drop out of high school (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). Articles reviewed have elaborated on the fact that even though there is an obvious student treatment gap between the Black male and other groups, charter schools are a better fit for Black people pursuing educational attainment. Attendance is a major indicator of a student's success.

As Black people move up in grade level, school attendance in the traditional school system decreases (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003). Schools are a microcosm in which children learn the social norms of our society (Bowen & Bowen, 1998). Children typically spend most of their developmental years in a school setting. For many young Black people, the school system becomes a primary source of socialization (Livingston & Nahimana, 2006). Attendance is a crucial factor in the academic achievement of students. When absenteeism increases, learning opportunities decrease for students at school (Hoffman, Llagas, & Snyder, 2003). Clark (2000) Charter schools are creating higher attendance rates for minorities in elementary and middle schools, while charter high schools continue to show signs of improvement in the attendance rates among the high at-risk groups. The high at-risk population had a high probability of dropping out. The traditional schools have also created inequity in the suspension rates among students.

Researchers, Knoff and Raffaele Mendez (2003) determined that students, who were male, Black, and in middle school are at a greater risk of being suspended from school (Knoff & Raffaele Mendez, 2003). The Black male experienced the highest percentage of any group as far as being suspended at least one time for all levels, elementary, secondary, and high school. The authors have also uncovered the fact Black males have the highest suspension rate per 100 students (Knoff & Raffaele Mendez, 2003). The most common reason for being suspended is disobedience/insubordination. The Black male is suspended more times for various infractions as opposed to any other group (Knoff & Raffaele Mendez, 2003). According to Mendez et al. (2002), Low Out of School Suspension (OSS) schools also was more likely than High OSS schools to include parents in the development of the school-wide discipline plan and to include in this plan ways to get parents involved before students' problems became severe and including having teachers contact parents prior to referring students to the office. Black people are suspended from school at a disproportionate rate across all levels mostly for minor infractions.

Traditional schools' inadequacies: class size, academic performance, attendance rates, suspension rates, student/teacher ratio, and teacher quality have caused great alarm in the academic community. The disparities between races, classes, and cultures have created an imbalance in social and economic opportunities for minorities. Alternative school choice offers solutions to traditional school shortcomings.

The results from the study indicated that the Black males and females in elementary, middle, and high school are suspended more often than the other groups studied White and Hispanic. As a direct result of the higher suspension rates, the Black male and Black females have a mean percentage greater than the other groups as well. The Black male was suspended 75% and 73% more often than their White and Hispanic male counterparts at the elementary school level, respectively. In middle school, the Black male was suspended approximately 49% and 31% as often as their White male and Hispanic male counterparts, respectively. At the high school level, the Black male received suspension 53% and 31% more often than their White male and Hispanic male counterparts, respectively as well. As for the female category of the study, the White female was suspended the least at all grade levels except for the elementary school level. The female Hispanic students were suspended the least at the elementary school level for the female gender group. At the elementary school level, the Black female was suspended 90% more often than both the White female and Hispanic female. At the middle school level, Black female was suspended 71% and 51% more often than their counterparts, White females, and Hispanic females, respectively. At the high school level, the Black female received suspension 57% and 38% more often than their counterparts, White females, and Hispanic females, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1. Mean Scores for North Carolina Charter School Students.

	ABC Male (N = 89)	ABC Female (N = 89)	ABC White (N = 71)	ABC Black (N = 68)	ABC Hispanic (N = 33)	American Indian (N = 8)	Asian (N = 17)	Multi Race (N = 47)
Mean	63.97	66.64	76.61	50.55	62.86	53.23	90.06	68.38

The creation of charter schools has offered a viable option to decrease the inequalities of the traditional school system. Parents desired to create better opportunities for their children to receive a solid educational foundation in a safe environment. The surrounding communities share similar concerns as the parents. The community desires to have schools produce effective students that will contribute to the sustainment of the economic environment in the community. With the overcrowding in the public school system, one of the current solutions is to house students in trailers behind the schools and other temporary spaces. Major cities in the United States are experiencing population growth and expansion. The ramifications of such a growth explosion have placed a major strain on the educational systems in the affected areas. The embracing of a charter school system has offered a viable solution to counter the short supply of schools (Brown, 2006). Charter school creation is out of necessity for an educational change.

Twelve years after the first charter school was launched, the charter school movement is now entering its adolescence. Like many pre-teens, it's had its share of growing pains, but I am confident that it is about to hit a growth spurt.

That is because charter schools are enormously popular with their primary clients—parents and students and because they are starting to show promising results in terms of student achievement" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Parents were in search of schools that offered better educational opportunities; schools that are peaceful and safe without violence or disruption among students, more manageable class sizes, and better teacher quality.

The charter school concept originated in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1991. Charter schools were created to increase the quality of education, provide more accountability, provide an option to the current traditional school system, reduce the student treatment gap, and increase economic wealth in the community. Charter schools started with two schools in 1991 and have grown to more than 5042 schools in 2010. Student enrollment has reached over 1.54 million within 39 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In July 2009, Mississippi allowed its charter law to expire with no hope for renewal (Center for Education Reform, 2010). There are four types of Charter schools: charter schools converted from public schools (Conversion schools); charter schools began from nothing (Startup schools); schools that offer a massive portion of instruction outside of the traditional classroom (Non-classroom-based schools), and charter schools that focus on online-based learning (Buddin & Zimmer 2007). Charter school management varies between individual proprietary, municipality operated, and corporate sponsorship. Previous studies have offered guidelines for the qualities of successful charter schools. The qualities of successful charter schools have been identified as the length of the school day, schools that offer mixed grades, schools that incorporate dress codes (uniforms), teachers who serve on the school board, students who double up on core subjects (math/reading), schools that offer a family style school culture, teachers who stay with students for two to three years, advisors who update parents every two weeks, schools that offer a strong accountability system, and the mission statement is part of the culture and highly visible. Charter schools are equipped with freedom and flexibility and are meeting the educational needs of children that are diverse in personalities, skills, and talents. In exchange for their freedom, charter schools are held to ambitious standards of accountability. Charter school systems are reflective of the real world that offers freedom and accountability and challenges that inspire creativity in problem-solving.

1.4. Effectiveness of Charter Schools

Charter schools are battling two obstacles: autonomy and flexibility hinged on the successful completion of ABC's Accountability Model and school finances. The North Carolina charter schools are subject to compliance with ABC's Accountability Model. The charter schools may administer a test that does not reflect the material mastered in the classroom. Should the charter schools follow the North Carolina standard course of study, then there is no mismatch between what is taught and what is measured. Most charter schools struggle financially to

cover expenses during the start-up phase since they receive no capital funding for facilities. According to the Center for Education Reform, as of November 2009, North Carolina has no new charter schools opened, thirty-four charter schools closed, and 98 charter schools operating with 34,845 students enrolled. In North Carolina, no new charter schools can open unless one closes. Nationwide there were 418 new charter schools that opened and 742 charter schools that closed, leaving 5042 charter schools in operation with over 1.5 million students enrolled.

Below are illustrations of a failed attempt and success stories of two qualitative charter school studies that have been recently performed. The first example illustrates how one of the largest charter school organizations failed their students and communities due to poor management practices. The researcher has provided two examples of qualitative studies, which have provided the charter school movement with supportive documentation of success. The success stories are intended to encourage the charter school proponents to continue the fight for an alternative free education system that works. The qualitative studies have identified several high-achieving charter schools and common keys to their success. One of the largest charter school closures in the era of the charter school movement occurred in California.

The closure of the 5-year-old California Charter Academy (CCA), which ran about 60 schools under four charters and enrolled some 10,000 students, represents one of the largest charter school failures since the nation's first such independent public school opened in 1991 (Sack, 2004). The charter schools were closed due to poor management practices (misappropriation of funds). The doors of the schools were closed suddenly, leaving the students without a school to attend. The students were referred to a nearby public school to continue their education. The state of California has the most charter school students and the second most charter schools in the country (Buddin & Zimmer, 2005). This is a more drastic example of charter school failures. An example of effective charter schools is discussed within the study that the U.S. Government has performed as well as a qualitative study performed in the Northeast region of the United States by Dr. Katherine Merseth.

Impressive Charter School Studies

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Innovation and Improvement (2004) has completed a descriptive study of eight charter schools, identifying the elements of effective charter schools. The charter schools were selected for their exemplary achievement, geographic, and programmatic variety. The schools selected are remarkably diverse in their population and located in various cities across the country. The researchers discuss the innovations and creations from eight successful charter schools that have raised the level of student learning. The eight charter schools are The Arts and Technology Academy Public Charter School; BASIS School, Inc.; Community of Peace Academy; KIPP Academy Houston; Oglethorpe Charter School; Ralph A. Gates Elementary School; Rox-

bury Preparatory Charter School; and The School of Arts and Sciences, which are a combination of elementary, secondary, and high schools.

The researchers have determined that, among the eight schools represented in this guide, three are middle schools, one is a comprehensive K-12 school, one is 5 - 12, another is K-8, and two are elementary schools, one of which includes a preschool program. Student enrollment ranges from 182 in middle school to 850 in elementary school. At three of the schools, more than 80% of the students qualify for subsidized meals; at three other schools, the percentage is about 20% or less. Three of the schools are chartered by their state, four hold a charter from the local district, and one is chartered by special chartering authority. The oldest of these schools has been in existence for 10 years; most are five or six years old (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The qualitative descriptive study was structured into two parts.

In part I, the researchers discuss the elements of effective charter schools in the study. During part II, the researchers discuss the charter school profiles. The investigators dissected the educational structure of each school to exploit an analysis of their common elements and most successful characteristics. The school's profile and curriculum are discussed. The location of the school, year first chartered and authorizer, grades, enrollment, English learners, subsidized meals, special needs, and per pupil spending is shared in each school's profile. All the charter schools are meeting the AYP, which is a requirement of NCLB. The researchers offer some unique educational pedagogy that has contributed immensely to the charter schools' success.

Another study of charter schools in the areas of Boston, Massachusetts was performed by Dr. Katherine Merseth and a team of investigators. The subjective qualitative study was performed over a two-year period. The criteria for selecting the charter schools were in the top 10% of state districts with high proportions of children in poverty, outperformed schools in local districts on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in aggregate scores and low-income subgroup, and achieved AYP status in 2006, and received at least one charter renewal from the Massachusetts Department of Education. The team of researchers collected data from interviews, focus groups, classroom observations, and documented processes. Merseth and her colleagues studied five charter schools located in the inner city of Boston, Massachusetts area to determine why the charter schools were more successful than the traditional schools in the same area. Massachusetts not only has a cap on charter schools allowed in the state and certain districts but also on charter enrollment. Only 2.5% of the students in Massachusetts have access to a charter school education. The students at the charter schools were performing with high academic achievements and college placements greater than that of the traditional schools in the Boston area. Merseth presented two main points from a unique qualitative research study. First, the author's aim provided the reader with a simplistic view of the elaborate detailed daily regimen and a blueprint of the infrastructure of five consistently

high-performing successful charter schools in the United States. The charter schools were located within the boundaries of Massachusetts's top 10% poverty-stricken areas in Boston. Each school is as different as a fingerprint but also shares common practices, policies, and processes designed to give the students a competitive advantage while achieving a first-rate public education. Second, Dr. Merseth offered the reader an opportunity to have an unprecedented look at a detailed description of each charter school's success, discipline, people and processes, and intricate workings.

Four of the charter schools are in Boston (Boston charter schools; Academy of the Pacific Rim, Boston Collegiate Charter School, Match Charter Public High School, and Roxbury Preparatory Charter School) and the other is in Lawrence, Massachusetts (Community Day Charter School). All the charter schools are in the belly of a competitive traditional school environment and feed from the same demographic pool within proximity in Boston. The charter schools are producing more successful outcomes in students' performances on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) and creating more students' acceptance into four-year colleges as opposed to their traditional counterparts.

Merseth (2009) qualitative study on highly successful charter schools lends support to the charter school movement for a free alternative, autonomous and accountable educational program. Her study provides a recipe for a top-notch public education for all students attending traditional, charter, private or parochial schools. Merseth presents solid evidence that creating a positive environment, teachers and parents buying into the process, implementing a transformative and inclusive pedagogy into the curriculum, a steadfast discipline and rewards process and consistency with policy can create successful programs for at-risk students from less desirable backgrounds. Dr. Merseth discussed the strategic layout of design, processes, and strength of the workforce and culture for each school. Moving forward the author elaborated on the attitudes toward the charter school movement, a diagnosis for choosing the right people, creating structures and systems, and preparation for classroom instruction and student outcomes.

2. Research Method, Design, Population, Data Collection, and Data Analysis

2.1. Research Method

The researcher collected charter school data from the NCDPI public website. The data collected resulted in a charter school sample size (n = 89), that was used to determine if the charter schools in North Carolina were either effective or ineffective. The researcher has opted not to administer a survey by email for two reasons: 1) the data located on the NCDPI website contains ex-post facto data for the academic year 2008-09 for all the variables except for the parental involvement variable. The ex-post facto data from the NCDPI website was used

to determine if there is a correlation between variables that can predict the effectiveness of a charter school, and 2) The researcher has decided to forgo using the parental involvement variable because the ex-post facto data from the NCDPI website contained several variables that could provide an indication on their effectiveness of charter schools. The NCDPI website contained variables and data that allowed the researcher to move forward with the study. The critical variables for the study were selected based on the researcher's inference from various research articles' literature. A quantitative analysis was interpreted after all the data was coded for input into the SPSS system and the out was put analyzed.

This is a quantitative study that used a correlation research design to evaluate the relationship between charter schools' effectiveness; attendance rates, short suspensions (less than 10 days) student-teacher ratios, and teacher quality. Comparison groups consist of students attending effective charter and ineffective charter schools. The study required the use of a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) analysis. The MANOVA "evaluates differences among centroids (composite means) for a set of DV's when there are two or more levels of an IV (groups)" (Fidell & Tabachnick, 2007: p. 21). The independent variable for the MANOVA analysis was charter schools that had values of effective and ineffective. The dependent variables for the MANOVA analysis were attendance rates, short suspension rates, student/teacher ratios, and teacher quality.

The operational definitions for the MANOVA variables are based on the researcher's interpretation as defined by the NCDPI charter school division website (NC School Report Card, 2010). The operational definition for teacher quality was developed based on the combination of two variables located on the NCDPI website: 1) percent of fully licensed teachers, and 2) percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers. The study has several constructs which were defined as an abstraction that cannot be observed directly; it was a concept invented to explain behavior. Constructs must have an operational definition which has been defined in terms of processes or operations that can be observed and measured (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2006: p. 122). The six constructs included in this study were attendance Rates, Short Suspension Rates, Student/Teacher Ratio, Teacher Quality, charter schools with effective values, and charter schools with ineffective values. The Attendance rates were the average percentage of students who attended school daily. The NCDPI has calculated the attendance rate by dividing the Final Average Daily Attendance (ADA) in the school year by the Final Average Daily Membership (ADM) in the school year.

The short suspension rates were based on a short-term out-of-school suspension (OSS) of less than ten days. The NCDPI has determined the suspension rates by dividing each school's total number of reported acts by the school's final Average Daily Membership (ADM) for the 2008-09 school year and then multiplying by 100. Each charter school sets its own disciplinary policies, many schools use after-school, Saturday, or in-school detentions to address disruptive or inappropriate behavior. OSS and expulsions are reserved for recurring, egregious,

or illegal offenses committed by students. Since charter schools have more autonomy; they determine their own student discipline process and reporting. The discipline process and reporting are not standardized among charter schools. Therefore, no state-level averages can be provided. The student-teacher ratio was determined by the total number of students enrolled in the school during the academic year divided by the total number of teachers instructing in the classroom during the same academic year.

The website for NCDPI offers definitions for the percent of fully licensed teachers and percent of classes taught by highly qualified teachers which the researcher has created an operational definition for "Teacher Quality" based on inference of combined definitions. The website for NCDPI defines "Percent of Fully Licensed Teachers" as the percentage of classroom teachers with clear initial or clear continuing licenses. The teacher has met all the requirements and teaching standards set by the State Board of Education for all areas of their license. NCDPI website also defines the "Percent of Classes Taught by Highly Qualified Teachers" as the percentage of classes in your school taught by highly qualified teachers as defined by law. As a requirement for the NCLB Act, all teachers instructing core academic subjects must be highly qualified. Highly qualified teachers were defined as fully licensed teachers by the state. In summation, "Teacher Quality" is the percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers that are fully licensed. (NCDPI 2008-09).

Charter schools with the dichotomist values of effective and ineffective were used to determine the performance of charter schools in North Carolina. The effective school variable is a dichotomous variable, where effective charter schools are coded as 1 and ineffective charter schools are coded as 0. Charter schools with the effective value were determined to be performing above average on the EOG test scores for reading and math. Charter schools with the ineffective value were determined to have performed below average EOG test scores for reading and math. The data for all the constructs were retrieved from the NCDPI charter school website.

The sample population (n = 89) of North Carolina charter schools produced a list of effective and ineffective charter schools from the output analysis of the SPSS data. The effective and ineffective charter schools were compared to the charter schools in the qualitative study performed by the U.S. Department of Education (2010), "A Closer Look at Charter Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling". The researcher investigated the schools to determine if the schools were chartered by a traditional school district, or not. There was a need to further investigate the charter schools identified as effective or ineffective based on the findings from a previous study (U.S. Department of Education, 2010). The results of the study indicated that the students enrolled in charter schools that were chartered by a traditional school district had greater gains than those in public non-charter schools and charter schools chartered by the state had even lesser gains than those chartered by public non-charter schools (NAPCS, 2010).

The researcher wanted to determine if the findings from the NAEP 2006 study were consistent with the findings of the current study on effective and ineffective charter schools.

It was anticipated that there would be a high degree of correlation between effective charter schools and attendance rates, short suspension rates, student-teacher ratios, and teacher quality. The researcher anticipated there would be a significant yet lower degree of correlation between ineffective charter schools and the same dependent variables. The results of the study were validated through the ex-post facto data collected through NCDPI. In addition, the results of the study provided the basis for further investigations of the factors contributing to the positive correlation between effective charter schools and charter schools affiliated with public school districts.

2.2. Participants and Context

The study focused on charter schools (n = 89) elementary, and middle schools within the state of North Carolina. After the data was entered into SPSS for analysis the researcher discovered that there were no EOG ABC Reading or Math scores for the North Carolina high schools. After strong consideration, the researcher decided to omit all the North Carolina high school data from the study and focus on the elementary and middle schools, which resulted in a sample population (n = 89). The remaining charter schools' locations were but were not limited to, elementary schools, middle schools, suburban, rural small towns, and urban areas. Charter schools in North Carolina contained all the variables for the study. The sample population (n = 89) of charter school data collected from the NCDPI website was ex-post facto data. The researcher was pleased to have the use of ex-post facto data to make an inference from the analysis for the study on effective and ineffective charter schools. The researcher has also requested the support of the NCDPI to determine whether the twenty-two charter schools identified as effective and ineffective charter schools from the SPSS output are a part of a traditional school district.

2.3. Procedure

The data used for this study is ex-post facto data retrieved from the NCDPI website. The data was entered into SPSS to prepare a quantitative analysis for interpretation. Further research was necessary for conjunction with the assistance of NCDPI, to determine if the schools identified as effective and ineffective charter schools were affiliated with a traditional school system, or not. Most of the data were collected from the NCDPI website such as school demographics, test scores; EOG scores, attendance rate, suspension rates, class size, student population, teacher certification, test scores based on the ethnicity of the student as well as Reading NCE and Math NCE scores.

The data collected from the NCDPI website was coded and entered an excel spreadsheet for input into the SPSS system to create a quantitative analysis. From

the data collection, the researcher analyzed and interpreted the information from the SPSS output. Most of the demographic data for past students was collected from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's (NCDPI) Education Statistics Access System online, NCDPI online reports and statistics, and the district office of the charter schools and traditional schools. The Access system contains information regarding school ABC's End of Grade (EOG) test, ABC's End of Course (EOC) test, school performance, suspension, expulsions, and dropout rates by gender, ethnic group, local educational agency (LEA), grade level, and counties.

All the ex-post facto data was collected from the NCDPI public website. The ex-post facto data measured information obtained about the independent variable; effective and ineffective charter school systems and their dependent variable attendance rate, short suspension rate, student/teacher ratio, and teacher quality. The researcher has been granted approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to proceeding with this study.

2.4. Data Analysis

Quasi Experimental Design

This was a quasi-experimental design, specifically casual-comparative correlational research. This study was used to determine if there is a correlation between variables. The researcher predicted that there would be a degree of relationship that exists between the independent and dependent variables. Once the responses were collected, they were entered into a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used a descriptive statistical method; numerical data were analyzed and tabulated using frequency distribution, means, and percentages. The ex-post facto data from the NCDPI website was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to moving forward with the research study.

2.5. Data Interpretation and Analysis

The independent variables are continuous ratio variables, and the dependent variables are discrete nominal variables. The central tendency mean (μ) values and variability standard deviation (σ) were recorded for both variables. The problem examined the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools when compared to the dependent variables. There is limited information regarding charter schools and the information is even scarcer when searching for quantitative studies which reference measurable success in charter schools. The variables for this study were developed based on the researcher's inference from the literature review regarding the most referenced variables that were discussed in qualitative studies focusing on charter school success. The variables used also give the reader in-depth information regarding attendance rate, short suspension rate, student-teacher rate, and teacher quality, and their impact on effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina. It is also imperative that other re-

searchers have a good understanding of the quantitative variables that create a significant difference in the success of North Carolina charter schools. The sample population (n = 89) consisted of elementary and middle charter schools in North Carolina that reported EOG scores. The sample approximates the population. From this study, the researcher desired to understand if there is a correlation between the variables and a significant difference in the impact of charter school success in a quantitative measure.

2.6. Data Demographics

The study reported here examined in detail the problem of the lack of information regarding the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina. This chapter is organized around the research question from Chapter I, which is "Is there a difference between effective and ineffective charter schools when evaluating the variables; attendance rates, suspension rates, student-teacher ratio, and teacher quality". Also, this chapter compares the findings from a previous quantitative study, the U.S. Department of Education (2010) to the findings from the current research study. The structure of this chapter addresses the comparative quantitative study results before addressing the research question. The researcher has explained that the methodology used for this research study, is a quantitative study using ex-post facto data from the website of NCDPI. The ex-post facto data was entered into SPSS to create a quantitative analysis for interpretation of results.

According to the 2009 ED facts state profile, there are 213 school districts, and 2513 traditional schools with 1044 of them receiving Title I funding. As for the charter schools, there are 98 charter schools in North Carolina with 13 charter schools reported receiving Title I funding according to the NCDPI 2008-09 website. The five largest traditional school districts in North Carolina according to student population for the academic year 2007-08; Wake County schools (134,401) with 13 charter schools, Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools (131,176) with 11 charter schools, Guilford County schools (72,389) with three charter schools, Cumberland County schools (53,295) with one charter school and Forsyth County schools (51,738) with five charter schools. Although Wake County school district is larger than the Charlotte-Mecklenburg school district, there are more (4) top-ranking charter schools located in the geographical location of Charlotte-Mecklenburg county. The top four charter schools are Kennedy Charter schools, Socrates Academy, Lake Norman Charter, and Metrolina Regional Scholars Academy.

Comparative Quantitative Research

In the article "A Closer Look at Charter Schools Using Hierarchical Linear Modeling", The results of the study indicated that the students enrolled in charter schools that were chartered by a traditional school district had greater gains than those in public non-charter schools and charter schools chartered by the state had even lesser gains than those chartered by public non-charter schools

(NAPCS, 2010). In response to the findings in the journal article mentioned above, the results of this current quantitative study differ in comparison. After further investigation, the researcher for this current study has determined that the 22 charter schools identified as either effective or ineffective charter schools in North Carolina are not affiliated with a traditional school district. In fact, no charter school in the state of North Carolina is affiliated with a traditional school system.

Data Analysis

The researcher has attempted to address the research question: is there a difference between effective and ineffective charter schools, when evaluating the variables; attendance rates, suspension rates, student-teacher ratio, and teacher quality? The researcher has completed a thorough investigation and analysis to determine if there is a correlation between the dependent variables; attendance rates, short suspensions, student-teacher ratio, teacher quality, and the dichotomous independent variables; effective and ineffective charter schools. The results of the study provided the researcher with a quantitative analysis indication as to which dependent variables have a statistical significant impact on the charter schools' performance in North Carolina.

Teacher quality is a measure of two variables from the NCDPI website: fully licensed teachers and highly qualified teachers. A principal component analysis was conducted to create a construct named, teacher quality. The first component of the principal component analysis explained 72.05% of the total variance. Therefore, it is legitimate to use the composite factor score as the construct for teacher quality. Similarly, a principal component analysis was conducted with two other variables from the NCDPI website: overall ABC Reading Passing Rate and overall ABC Mathematics Passing Rate. The first component explained 92.96% of the total variance. As a result, the factor scores from this principal component analysis measured the relative effectiveness of the schools. To determine which schools are effective and which schools are ineffective, one standard deviation is below or above the mean used. Schools with a factor score of one standard deviation below the mean were considered ineffective and coded 0. Schools with a factor score of one standard deviation above the mean were considered effective and coded 1. The researcher has identified 22 charter schools in the study which were determined to be either effective or ineffective charter schools after the data was entered into SPSS. This resulted in 12 ineffective schools and 10 effective schools. With the list of 22 charter schools, the researcher has contacted NCDPI to determine if either of the charter schools identified as ineffective or effective were chartered by a traditional school district or not. The results indicated that no charter schools in North Carolina were affiliated with a traditional school system.

The research question that addressed: Is there a difference between effective and ineffective charter schools, when evaluating the variables; attendance rates, suspension rates, student-teacher ratio, and teacher quality" is reported below. The alpha (α) statistical significance level has been set at .05 for hypothesis testing. Also, the results of the hypothesis testing have been reported as well. Based

on the findings, the researcher has presented a compelling argument as to which variables can indicate success in charter schools.

Hypothesis Testing Procedure

The researcher has selected the MANOVA is to test the hypothesis, due to the fact there was one independent variable (effective charter schools) and four dependent variables: (attendance rate (H1), short suspensions (H2), student/teacher ratio (H3), and teacher quality (H4)). Levine's test of equality of error variance was performed to determine if the assumption of MANOVA was held. The MANOVA using Wilks' Lambda revealed a significant difference, $F(4,17) = 4.23$, $p < .05$, $\eta 2 = .50$. The post hoc tests identified Attendance rates and Teacher quality as having the most significant difference.

According to Cohen (1988), a small effect size is listed as (.01), a medium effect size (.06), and a large effect size is listed as (.14). In response to Cohen's (1988) scale (H1) equals .212 is a large effect size, (H2) equals .176 is large effect size, (H3) equals .049 is a small effect size and (H4) equals .336 is large effect size. The results presented above indicate that all successful charter schools are not affiliated with a traditional school district. Also, the attendance rates and teacher quality presented a strong correlation among variables in the success of effective charter schools.

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3. Limitations of This Research and Summary of the Results

A limitation of this study in terms of external validity is the selection bias created by the focus on one state, North Carolina. There is limited information on the distinction between effective and ineffective charter schools. This study has high external validity since the results can be replicated in other settings by other researchers. The North Carolina charter school law has been set at a cap of

100; however, during the short Senate session for 2010 lawmakers in North Carolina will decide whether to move forward with lifting the restrictive 100 charter school cap, Senate Bill 704. This restriction may limit the generalizability of this research. Also, no charter schools in North Carolina are affiliated with a traditional school district. There are ten states without charter laws, Alabama, Kentucky, Maine, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington, and West Virginia. There are several states that have expired their charter school caps, and states such as Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Minnesota, New Jersey, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming all have no legislative cap that restricts the number of charter schools.

Also, states have the autonomy to determine funding levels, set accountability standards, and determine charter school authorization. In North Carolina, the state provides 64% of educational funding to the local school districts; federal funding is at 11%, and local funding is at 25% (NCDPI, 2009). Charter school funding is based on the school's student enrollment. Charter schools are also eligible for grants, provided by federal legislation, to help with start-up costs (Innovation in Education, 2009). Differences in North Carolina and other states in the context of layered legislative and regulatory requirements, including funding, also limit the generalizability of this research.

A limitation to the internal validity was due to the reduction of the sample population, by removing the charter high school data from the study. The sample population was from 98 to 89. The adjustment to the sample population resulted in the focus on elementary and secondary schools. The data used was ex-post facto data from the NCDPI website which was reported by the charter school operators. Future research should consider including a charter high school data when isolating the study to the state of North Carolina. Also, a charter school survey and personal interviews should be used to triangulate the data to further improve the quality and internal validity. The study should also be expanded across states that are comparable to North Carolina.

Strength of this Research

This study was a quantitative study that uses ex-post facto data from a government website, NCDPI, for the academic school year 2008-09. The study uses elementary and middle charter school data from rural, urban, and suburban charter school settings. The results of a quantitative study are more reliable than a subjective qualitative study. A qualitative study that uses a survey has the potential to experience the effects of self-selection bias in the survey respondents. Also, the data from a qualitative study using a survey has the potential to threaten external validity by creating biased results based on who responds to the survey. The focus of the study is isolated to the state of North Carolina.

Summary of the Results

This study has addressed the primary research question: What are the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina? The results of the research question were driven by the findings of the hypothesis (4). In

the next section, the research question is revisited, and the findings are discussed.

The research question states, what are the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina? and the hypotheses have determined the results. The null hypothesis states There is no difference in Attendance Rates between effective and ineffective charter schools. The alternative hypothesis states: There is a difference in Attendance Rates between effective and ineffective charter schools. The researcher has rejected the null hypothesis since the *p*-value (.031) is less than the Statistical Significance level (.05). The researcher concluded that there is a significant difference between Attendance Rates for effective and ineffective charter schools.

The null hypothesis states: There is no difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools. The alternative hypothesis states: There is a difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools. The researcher has failed to reject the null hypothesis since the *p*-value (.052) is greater than the Statistical Significance level (.05). The researcher concludes that there is no significant difference between Short Suspensions for effective and ineffective charter schools.

The null hypothesis states: There is no difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools. The alternative hypothesis states: There is a difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools. The researcher has failed to reject the null hypothesis since the *p*-value (.324) is greater than the Statistical Significance level (.05). The researcher concluded that there is no significant difference between Student-Teacher Ratio for effective and ineffective charter schools.

The null hypothesis states: There is no difference in Teacher Quality between effective and ineffective charter schools. The alternative hypothesis state there is a difference in Teacher Quality between effective and ineffective charter schools. The researcher has rejected the null hypothesis since the *p*-value (.005) is less than the Statistical Significance level (.05). The researcher can conclude that there is a significant difference between Teacher Quality for effective and ineffective charter schools.

Based on the research findings, the hypothesis has determined that there are two variables that can provide an indication of charter school success. When addressing the research question "What are the differences between effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina? The researcher has determined that the variable, Attendance Rates, and Teacher Quality has a statistical significant impact on effective and ineffective charter schools. The variable teacher quality has the strongest impact on determining effective and ineffective charter schools in North Carolina.

The effective charter schools' dependent variables for the study indicate that attendance rates averaged 96% to 97%. The effective charter schools' number of short suspensions of less than 10 days ranged from 0 to 11 occurrences per year. The effective charter school student-teacher ratio averaged 12 to 16 students per

teacher in the classroom. The teacher quality dependent variable for effective charter schools is derived from the variables of fully licensed teachers and high-quality teachers. The teacher quality ratio for effective charter schools ranged from −.72240 to 1.09954.

Effective versus Ineffective Charter Schools

The effective charter schools' attendance rates average was 96% to 97%. The ineffective charter schools' attendance rates average was 79% to 97%. Effective charter schools' short suspensions of more than 10 days range from 0 to 11 occurrences per year. Ineffective charter schools' short suspensions of less than 10 days range from 1 to 151 occurrences per year. The effective charter schools' student-teacher ratio averages 12 to 16 students per teacher in the classroom. While the ineffective charter schools' student-teacher ratio averages 5 to 16 students per teacher in the classroom. The effective charter schools' teacher quality ratio includes ranges from −.72240 to 1.09954. While the teacher quality ratio for ineffective charter schools ranges from −2.05044 to .61168.

Ineffective charter schools, ABC White scores range from 85 to 95. Ineffective charter schools, ABC White scores that were recorded range from 13 to 83. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Black scores range from 65 to 95. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Black scores that were recorded range from 6 to 38. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Hispanic scores range from 58 to 85. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Hispanic scores that were recorded ranged from 28 to 95. Ineffective charter schools, there were no scores recorded for the ABC Indigenous person. Ineffective charter schools recorded scores for ABC Native American ranged from 27 to 40. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Asian scores range from 84 to 95. Ineffective charter schools, there were no ABC Asian scores recorded. Effective charter schools, ABC Multi-Race scores ranged from 86 to 95. Ineffective charter schools, ABC Multi-Race scores that were recorded range from 29 to 59. Ineffective charter schools, overall ABC Reading scores ranged from 85% to 95% for students passing. Ineffective charter schools, overall ABC Reading scores ranged from 29% to 51% for students passing. Effective charter schools, overall ABC Math scores ranged from 91.7% to 95%. Ineffective charter schools, overall ABC Math scores ranged from 32% to 72%. Table 2 discusses ineffective charter schools ABC scores by ethnic background. The ABC White scores that were recorded ranged from 13 to 83.

Table 2. Ineffective charter schools dependent variable results.

Charter school	Attend. Rate	Short Suspension	Student Teacher Ratio	Teacher Quality	Fully Licensed Teachers	High Quality Teachers
(I1)	91	151	4.50	−2.05044	33	77

Continued

(I2)	90	31	10.89	−.69009	78	75
(I3)	94	33	14.43	−.54109	71	83
(I4)	94	33	14.10	.54705	80	100
(I5)	95	8	12.69	−.65149	85	71
(I6)	95	1	15.76	−1.42389	64	69
(I7)	95	25	15.26	.61168	82	100
(I8)	79	6	10.22	−1.13532	41	91
(I9)	94	11	10.27	−1.18827	80	63
(I10)	97	4	19.71	−1.06417	94	56
(I11)	97	22	10.67	−1.04442	83	64
(I12)	93	35	12.12	−.75584	60	86

4. Discussion of the Results

Hypothesis and Conclusions

H0: There is no difference in Attendance Rates between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H1: There is a difference in Attendance Rates between effective and ineffective charter schools.

The researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the observed sample difference is unlikely to be the result of chance. There is a statistical significant difference between Attendance Rates for effective and ineffective charter schools, $F(1,20) = 5.38$, $p = .031$, $\eta 2 = .212$.

H0: There is no difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H2: There is a difference in Short Suspensions between effective and ineffective charter schools.

The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis and concludes that the difference could have occurred by chance. There is no statistical significant difference between Short Suspensions for effective and ineffective charter schools, $F(1,20) = 4.27$, $p = .052$, $\eta 2 = .176$.

H0: There is no difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools.

H3: There is a difference in Student Teacher ratio between effective and ineffective charter schools.

The researcher fails to reject the null hypothesis and concludes that the difference could have occurred by chance. There is no statistical significant difference between Student-Teacher Ratio for effective and ineffective charter schools, $F(1, 20) = 1.02$, $p = .324$, $\eta 2 = .049$.

H0: There is no difference in Teacher Quality between effective and ineffective

charter schools.

H4: There is a difference in Teacher Quality between effective and ineffective charter schools.

The researcher rejects the null hypothesis and concludes that the observed sample difference is unlikely to be the result of chance. There is a statistical significant difference between Teacher Quality for effective and ineffective charter schools $F(1, 20) = 10.12$, $p = .005$, $\eta 2 = .336$.

Recommendations for further research and conclusions

Based on this research, there are several opportunities that have been presented and should be strongly considered for the ongoing implementation of charter school legislation.

1) Attendance Rate is another variable in this quantitative study that has proven to have a significant impact on charter school effectiveness. The charter school operators should focus on increasing the attendance rates of the students within their schools. The charter school operator should implement an "In School Suspension" (ISS) policy if needed. Students will be able to continue their education in a controlled environment, keeping students connected to the academic environment.

2) Teacher Quality has a significant impact on the success of charter schools. Teacher training is an attribute of teacher quality. A well-trained teacher on the current pedagogy techniques translates to great equity for the charter school workplace. It is recommended that the charter school operator and local, state, and federal government agencies mandate that teachers continue their professional development on yearly basis. Professional development training provides the teachers with the most current pedagogy tools to be implemented in the classroom.

3) It is recommended that the "sharing of best practices" become implemented as a policy for all. Teachers should increase the "sharing of best practices" between each other, between charter schools to the charter school, as well as between charter schools to traditional schools. Government agencies need to establish a platform or forum where "best practices" can be shared and received in a positive environment. If needed, an incentive program should be implemented by the school systems and/or government agencies for best practices that have documented proven success and submitted for sharing.

4) It is recommended that charter school teachers continue to increase their pedagogy skills in the areas of inclusive, exclusive, and transformative training. It has been suggested that charter schools' strength is their ability to create a niche for educating students' diverse needs. Skills developed around delivering and meeting the diverse needs of certain ethnic groups should be benched mark for sharing with other educators within and across the charter school lines.

5) The final and most important recommendation is for future researchers of quantitative studies to increase the number of variables being studied, more variables in addition to the variables that were studied in this research. Additional

variables can provide a stronger indication of success for effective charter schools. After the data analysis was complete the researcher desired to use additional variables to gain a better indication as to what other variables are important to the success of effective charter schools. The researcher believes that using other variables would have provided a better perspective on the successful characteristics of charter schools that would have greater value to charter school operators and prospective researchers of quantitative studies.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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