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ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF
LITERACY JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

by

Racquel Harris

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Major: Instruction and Curriculum Leadership

University of Memphis

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Dedication

I dedicate this to my family. To my husband, Larry Jr. Your understanding made this experience possible. I could not imagine doing this without you and I know that it would not have been possible. Your positivity and encouragement are what pushed me. “Just write.” Thank you for those words. Thank you for playing Bishop G.E. Patterson daily. Thank you for choosing me. You are too good to me. I love you baby.

I dedicate this to my son, Larry III. Thank you for understanding even if you did not know what was going on. Thank you for showing me that you missed me with your kisses and hugs. Thank you for looking for me when you woke up in the middle of the night. You inspire me to want to be more and do more. Thank you for choosing me. I love you my chocolate drop.

I dedicate this to all the praying mothers. It is because of you that we can live our dreams. Your prayers cover us when we do not have enough sense to pray for ourselves. It is the grace that is bestowed upon us because you prayed. It is the mercy that we are granted that gives us a second chance, all because you continue to pray. Your prayers cover us, and now we pray for our children. Now our children, your grandchildren are covered because we pray. To all the praying mothers that I know: Bobbie Jean Whitehorn-Watkins, Amelia Harris, Una (Bonnie) Lewis, Theresa Renee Watkins-Luke, Diane Godfrey, Monice Whitehorn-Williams, Debbie Whitehorn, Sis Janet Sherrod, Mona D. Owens, Shyrell Johnson, Ursala Mosley and me. Thank you, God, for praying mothers.

Thank you Uncle Sunny. Thank you for always loving and supporting all of us.

I dedicate this to my mom. You planted the seed in me and for that you are the reason. Thank you for believing in me, choosing me and praying for me. I miss you and I love you mama. I know, “You love me more.” God is so good!

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But God. Several obstacles arose during this process that should have derailed my journey, but God. I doubted myself along the way and managed to push through it all, but God. None of this would have happened without God. Thank you for your grace and mercy. Thank you for constantly blessing me abundantly. Thank you for taking care of my family during this process. You have blessed me so much and I am forever grateful and incredibly humble.

I would like to thank my committee. Thank you to Dr. J. Helen Perkins, my chair. Without your guidance and support I would not have been able to complete this journey. Thank you to my committee members Dr. William Hunter, Dr. Laurie MacGillivray and Dr. Susan Nordstrom. You did not have to say yes, but you did, and I am forever grateful. Your inquiry pushed my thinking and challenged me to be better. I have grown tremendously under your leadership and I am different woman because of it. Thank you for the opportunity to learn, grow, and evolve.

I want to thank the brave teachers that agreed to participate in my study. Thank you for trusting me to capture your experience. I could not have completed this work without you. Thank you for sharing your truth.

Matthew 6:33 KJV – But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Abstract

Racquel D. Harris. Ed.D. The University of Memphis. December 2019. Elementary Literacy Teachers' Perceptions on the Impact of Literacy Job-Embedded Professional Development. Major Professor: Dr. J. Helen Perkins.

This qualitative case study focused on exploring elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy job-embedded professional development (JEPD). The study was guided by the following research questions: RQ1. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants? RQ2. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of the benefits of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants? RQ3. How does literacy job-embedded professional development, in which elementary literacy teachers have been participants, impact literacy teachers? RQ4. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective?

A demographic survey and a three-interview series approach were employed to discover the life history with literacy JEPD, details of the experience with literacy JEPD and the participants' reflections on the meaning of their experiences with literacy JEPD. Three themes were developed as a result: a) meeting instructional need; b) building teacher capacity; c) meaningful job-embedded professional development. The findings of this study suggest that elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of JEPD were contingent upon when in the teaching career of the participants these experiences occurred. Participants perceptions of the benefits of literacy of JEPD were that they improved their instructional practices as well as increased student outcomes. Participant perceptions of the impact of literacy JEPD were that they improved their self-efficacy. Finally, the participants considered literacy JEPD that were collaborative, engaging, content specific, precise and classroom focused to be effective.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

We have witnessed the evolution of education over the last fifty years as a result of education reform. Reform movements such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 have placed higher expectations on student achievement, which in turn placed emphasis on improving teacher practices (Borko, 2009). The response to this call came by way of defining and offering various professional development models for the purpose of supporting teachers trying to fulfill the promise of educating children.

Professional development has become an evolving concept that has impacted the instructional practices of teachers and student learning outcomes as well (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Because of this, it has been deemed imperative for educators to engage in professional development opportunities that will grow their instructional practices (Ingvarson, Meirs, & Beavis, 2005). This research study focused on inquiry that narrowed the scope of professional development to job-embedded professional development (JEPD) for the purpose of exploring the lived experiences of elementary literacy teachers engaging in JEPD to describe the impact of JEPD from their perspective.

Background

While the concept of professional development has received a considerable amount of attention since the inception of NCLB of 2001, it is important to remember that the ultimate goal of increasing the capacity of teachers through professional development has always been to improve the learning outcomes of students (Avalos, 2010). Understanding the history of professional development, will strengthen the idea of why additional research on this topic is important to the process of expanding educational research in this area.

Historically, professional standards for teachers were not deemed relevant because teaching was not considered to be a profession. In the past, teachers lacked specialized training and the knowledge base that is deeply rooted in educational culture today. Shullman (1987) identifies the categories of knowledge base as the following: content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and “knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values, and their philosophical and historical grounds” (p. 8). All of which are the direct result of the initial education of pre-service teachers and the continuous professional development implemented for practicing teachers. Hargreaves (2000) attributes this lack to the lack of initial education required of teachers to become teachers, as well as the absence of the idea of growing and developing teachers.

This view of teachers changed when there became a need to improve the learning outcomes of students. This was consistent with the signing of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA, 1965), which called for money to be allocated to increase student achievement through developing teachers in order to develop effective teachers and leaders, for the purpose of improving the learning outcomes of students. It was then that the capacity of teachers became a topic of interest. Improving the instructional practices of teachers through professional development became the focus in addressing the need to improve the learning outcomes of students. This opened the door to explore the concept of professional development, varying forms of professional development and its effectiveness (ESEA section 2001).

Job embedded professional development (JEPD) is a form of professional development that is implemented on both district and school level. The very definition of professional development emphasizes the use of JEPD, and research supports the idea of JEPD being

effective. Although there is a significant amount of research that supports the effectiveness of JEPD, there seems to be a lack of research that unpacks elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD.

Statement of the Problem

Of all the variables that affect the learning outcomes of students, the quality of the instructional practices of teachers is the one that is controllable by districts and schools. It is estimated that teachers have more of an impact, in comparison to competing school factors, on student learning outcomes on both reading and math assessments (“Teachers Matter,” 2012). Understanding the importance of teachers to the learning process of students brings to the forefront the significance of investing in teachers with effective learning opportunities to enhance their practice. It also heightens the importance of understanding and implementing effective professional development for teachers. Because a one size fits all model does not apply, intentional development of learning opportunities that are job-embedded, per education reform, and fits the needs of the teacher and the situation, were variables that were important to consider during this process. It was equally as important to understand how consideration to the position of the professional learning contributed to the effectiveness of the model employed. This research study explored the impact of JEPD from the perspective of the elementary literacy teachers impacted through participation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore how elementary literacy teachers described their experiences with literacy focused JEPD to determine its impact. This study was designed to illustrate the multiple meanings of the shared experiences of elementary literacy teachers as participants of job-embedded professional development in Southwest Tennessee. The

elementary literacy teachers that participated in this study met the following selection criteria (Creswell, 2007):

1. current elementary literacy teachers employed with the district under study for a minimum of three years
2. professional elementary teaching license issued by the Tennessee Department of Education (excluding teachers working on an alternate license)
3. ongoing participant of literacy focused JEPD on elementary school-level and district-level (action research, case discussion, coaching, critical friends' groups, data teams/assessment development, examining student work/tuning protocol, implementing individual professional growth/learning plans, lesson study, mentoring, portfolios, professional learning communities (PLCs) and study groups (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003)
4. meet the yearly average professional development hours as required by Tennessee Department of Education (5 days)

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

RQ1. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

RQ2. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of the benefits of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

RQ3. How does literacy job-embedded professional development, in which elementary literacy teachers have been participants, impact literacy teachers?

RQ4. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective?

Significance of the Study

This study focused on the elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD. The effective components of JEPD have been documented and acknowledged on a national, state, and local level, but this study focused on the voices and the experiences of the teachers that participated in JEPD. This research study was important because it adds to the current research on teacher perceptions on the impact of job-embedded professional development the unique perspectives of elementary literacy teachers in Southwest Tennessee. This study provided a platform for teachers to reflect upon their experiences to describe literacy JEPD and its impact on the participants.

Definition of Terms

The following are reoccurring terms that are deemed significant to understanding the process of the dissertation:

- *Benefit*: 1a. something that produces good or helpful results or effects that promotes wellbeing (Merriam-Webster)
- *Impact*: 2. the force or impression of one thing on another (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
- *Job-Embedded Professional Development (JEPD)*: take the shape of “formal and informal social interactions among teachers, situated in the context of their school and the classrooms (Croft et al., 2010, p. 5)
- *Lived Experience*: reflecting on the prereflective life of human existence while living through it (van Manen, 2014)
- *Professional Development*: activity designed to improve the instructional practices of teachers

- *Professional Learning*: the learning that takes place during professional developments
- *Reform-Based Approach*: day-to-day learning experiences that are embedded in teacher practices that occur during the process of teaching (Hirsh, 2009)
- *Traditional Approach*: the workshop approach of professional development (Penuel et al., 2007)

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

All teachers participate in JEPD in one form or another. Although education reform has deemed it effective, it is important to understand what JEPD means to the teachers that engage in this type of contextualized learning. It is equally as important to know the impact that JEPD has on teachers, but from their perspective, and in their own words. This chapter will focus on the situated learning theoretical perspective guiding the research study that will assist in discovering the meanings teachers ascribe to JEPD from their perspectives and the impact of JEPD on their instructional practices. An exploration through the literature will provide current trends in the area of JEPD, as well as expose opportunities for further research. A conclusion will be provided to summarize the conceptual framework, the review of literature, and the importance of further research.

The literature that was selected for the purpose of this review explores the origins of professional development, its significance to the teaching profession, and its evolution to effectiveness over time.

Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework can be looked upon as the foundation of the research study proposed. The position of the researcher, beliefs and understandings, are what make up the conceptual framework, or what Egbert and Sanden (2014) refer to as an “overall world-view” (p.5). The conceptual framework can be described as how the researcher views the world. This view determines whether knowledge is discovered, uncovered or constructed. This is also known as the epistemological position of the researcher (Egbert & Sanden, 2014). Epistemology is developed within the conceptual framework when the understandings of knowledge, truth or

Truth take form (Egbert & Sanden, 2014). The researcher's epistemological position will be further explored to assist in understanding the lens in which the research study has been constructed.

Constructionism

The research study was positioned in the constructionism epistemology. Constructionism argues that truth is not definitive, nor is it objective (Crotty, 1998). Egbert and Sanden (2014) offer that under constructionism "Knowledge for each individual is viewed as a construction based on the individual's experiences" (p. 21). People engaging with "the realities of our world" are what shape these experiences that allow for the construction of multiple truths and meanings (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Constructionism is the epistemological position of this research study because the truth of the participants is contingent upon their worldview, which Creswell (2007) refers to as an individuals' belief system, which plays a role in how meaning is constructed. According to Crotty (1998), different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Constructionism offers the opportunity to respect the variations of truth constructed by each participant, while allowing space to explore the perspectives of many.

This research study used a qualitative approach to explore varying experiences of teachers engaged in job-embedded professional development for the purpose of understanding the impact of JEPD on their instructional practices. The constructionism epistemology offers that "each person is likely to have experiences that vary from those of another" (Egbert & Sanden, 2014, p.21). This epistemological stance acknowledged that there would be individual differences in how knowledge was constructed by each teacher that participated in JEPD. Teachers participating in the same JEPD, situated in the same location, will have varying

experiences because knowledge is constructed based on the individual, whose perspective is informed by their own life experiences and worldview.

Situated Learning Theory

This research focused on exploring elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD. The researcher chose to frame this work using case study as the methodology because it allowed the researcher to take an in-depth look into the phenomenon of literacy JEPD from the perspective of the elementary literacy teacher, the bounded system. Situated learning theory was the conceptual framework that guided the inquiry. The term 'situated' references the activity, context, and culture in which the practice is taking place. This is linked to JEPD by definition. JEPD is embedded throughout the day of teachers for the purpose of providing opportunities to improve their instructional practices by experiencing professional learning in a context that is connected to their day-to-day. Professional development for teachers in the context of the school environment allows for teachers to have the opportunity to actively practice teaching strategies in context, or in a natural environment. The alternative approaches decontextualize the learning process and emphasize discourses that are abstract in nature (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Croft, Coggshall, Dolan, Powers and Killion, (2010) support teachers learning in the school and classroom setting and consider this a relevant component of JEPD. Situated learning theory is the lens that allowed the researcher to explore the phenomenon of JEPD with an understanding of the significance of how it was experienced and an explanation for why the participants valued the attributes of JEPD.

Situated learning theory provided a balance that allowed for inquiry into the knowledge and competency levels were explored with the phenomenon of JEPD. With this theory, understanding the context in which the learning was taking place was possible.

Early thinkers, such as Vygotsky and Dewey, laid the foundation for situated learning theory, which supports the concept of contextualized learning (Allal, 2001; Herrington & Oliver, 1995). These theorists are linked to key learning theories; whose characteristics closely align with the key tenets of situated learning theory. Although today, there are clear characteristics of situated learning that help to define the tenets of situated learning theory, early theorists separately conceptualized ideas and theories related to learning that were later analyzed and brought together to create a model of learning centered around three key tenets: authentic context, social interaction and constructivism (Bell, Maeng & Binns, 2013; Green, Eady Andersen, 2018; Orgill, 2007; Schell & Black, 1997).

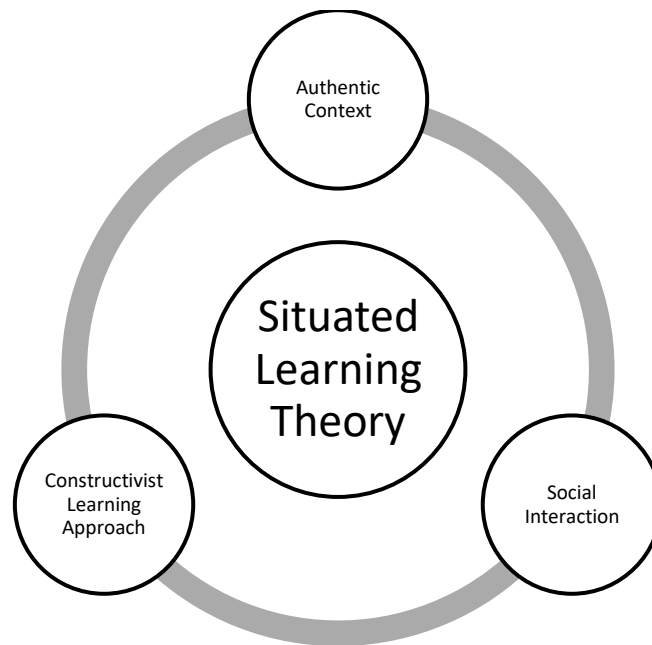


Figure 1. Key tenets of situated learning theory. Adapted from Green, C., Eady, M., & Andersen, P. (2018). Preparing quality teachers. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry*, 6(1).

<http://dx.doi.org/10.20343/teachlearningqu.6.1.10>

Early Thinkers and Learning Theories Related to Situated Learning Theory. The activity-based theory that Canole, Dyke, Oliver and Seale (2004) and Allal (2001) associates with Vygotsky and the Russian school, considers a “framework of activity within a socio-cultural context of rules and community” (Canole et al., 2004, p. 19). Activity based theory aligns with key tenets of situated learning theory: authentic context, social interaction and constructivist learning approach (Green et al., 2018). Authentic context is defined by Seely-Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) as “the ordinary practices of the culture” (p. 34). Seely-Brown et al. (1989) further add that people who exist within a cultural framework participate in activities that are defined and developed by the culture in which it exists. Allal (2001) credits Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory as being the foundation that supports Seely-Brown’s et al. (1989) ideas of enculturation, or the idea that describes contextualized learning and its process of using social interactions in context to allow the construction of meaning. Situated learning theory advocates for participation in activities that are related to experiences that are reflective and present in the environment in which the learning is taking place (Green et al., 2018).

Adding to the understanding of the importance of the above-mentioned experiences of participants, Canole et al. (2004) associates Dewey with experiential theory, which recognizes experiences as being the “foundation of learning” (p. 20). This theory connects to the key tenets by maintaining that experiences not only morph into knowledge, but also allow space for reflection, which can lead to change (Conloe et al., 2004).

In this same perspective, participants of this type of contextualized learning construct meaning while engaging in activities and acquiring experiences situated in the workplace through collaborative communities, which then also highlights the constructivist learning approach (Seely-Brown et al., 1989). This learning approach adds to the importance of

participants' engagement in an authentic context to construct their own meaning through their experiences and interactions within their environments. This type of collaborative learning, which is also described in Vygotsky's socially situated learning theory (Conole et al., 2004), aligns with the second and third tenets of situated learning theory (Seely-Brown et al., 1989). The connection to early theorist work in the cognitive realm is pertinent to understanding the impact of the tenets of situated learning theory, as research suggests that the key tenets of situated learning theory maximizes the learning of participants because the contextualized approach offers opportunities for authentic instruction, which then leads to "effective and long term learning" (Green et al., 2018, p. 108).

Because of the work of the early theorists, situated learning theory continues to evolve. Lave and Wenger (1991) later connected the ideas of the early theorist to develop a precise idea of how to change the building blocks of teacher preparation and development with the concept of community of practice. Lave and Wenger's (1991) sense of community involves learning in organic environments which may increase the chances of the participant using what they learn because the professional learning is realistic, and in the same context of the work environment (Schell & Black, 1997). Lave and Wenger's (1991) considerations of the end results of professional learning and the purpose behind the practice is what led to what we now describe as situated learning.

Major Thinkers of Situated Learning Theory. Although, there are many contributors to the underlying ideas associated with situated learning theory (Allal, 2001), John Seely-Brown, Allan Collins and Paul Duguid (1989) are the pioneers of positioning situated learning theory as an "emerging model of instruction in 1989" (Herrington & Oliver, 1995, p. 1; Allal, 2001). Seely-Brown et al. (1989) argue the following about situated learning in their research:

Many teaching practices implicitly assume that conceptual knowledge can be abstracted from the situations in which it is learned and used. [...] this assumption inevitably limits the effectiveness of such practices. Drawing on recent research to cognition as it is manifest in everyday activity, the authors argue that knowledge is situated, being in part a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used. [...] this view of knowledge affects our understanding of learning. (p. 32)

Seely-Brown et al. (1989) take a direct approach in defining why the key tenets of situated learning theory cannot be isolated ideas or occurrences in situational learning. The authors argue that situations themselves structure the learning and that learning is not independent of the situation (Seely-Brown et al., 1989). Admittedly leaning on the works of earlier thinkers, Seely-Brown et al. (1989) transitioned this thinking to the acquisition of knowledge in and out of schools. Seely-Brown et al. (1989) agreed with Vygotsky and the Russian school, that “learning is a process of enculturation in which the opportunity to observe and practice *in situ* allows the development of contextualized competencies incorporating the tools and forms of social interaction that are valued in a given cultural community” (Allal, 2001, p. 408).

Seely-Brown et al. (1989) places emphasis on the importance of authentic activity that is structured by the culture in which the activity is situated, while also offering space for meaning to be constructed because of the experiences acquired while collaboratively engaging with the authentic activity. This emphasizes evidence of the key tenets of situated learning theory as presented by Seely-Brown et al. (1989): authentic context, social interaction and constructivist learning approach.

Situated Perspective and Job-Embedded Professional Development

The relevant literature reviewed regarding situated learning perspectives looked at this from the vantage point of teacher preparation programs. This is likely because being a novice teacher to the teaching profession is now considered a multifaceted and difficult point in the journey of a teacher (Avalos, 2010). As a result, a significant amount of the professional development articles published between 2000-2010 in *Teaching and Teacher Education* were dedicated to exploring professional learning and support for beginning and pre-service teachers (Avalos, 2010). The following will reveal an in-depth view into the situated perspective in teaching and teacher education.

As a result of the novice teacher having an unrealistic idea of the demands of a teacher, some teacher education programs (TEP) deemed it necessary to align their programs with a situated learning perspective to add context to what teaching will be for students in their programs of study (Green, Eady & Andersen, 2018). Both Bell, Maeng and Binns (2013) and Green et al. (2018) conducted empirical research studies that focused on TEPs that employed a situated learning perspective for the purpose of preparing preservice teachers for the task of educating children in a realistic setting. Bell et al. (2013) conducted a research study with a sample size of 26 preservice science teachers enrolled in a two-year master level program. Green et al. (2018) sought to implement the key tenets of situated learning theory (authentic context, social interaction, and constructivism) in order to prepare 154 participants positioned in a Bachelor of Primary Education program. The purpose of the explorations of both studies was to determine the effectiveness of the teacher education program (TEP) intentionally aligned with a situated perspective. Data collection for Bell et al. (2013) consisted of a series of three interviews, lesson plans, observations, field notes and reflections that were all later coded in the

analysis stage of the research process. Data collection for Green et al. (2018) consisted of two surveys that included qualitative data, which then utilized thematic analysis. Bell et al. (2013) concluded that the TEP program aligned with a situated learning perspective was effective due to its participants' integration of what was contextually learned into their instructional practices as student teachers. Green et al (2018) revealed the participants' desire to have more contextual learning experiences.

It is apparent that contextualized learning opportunities increase the readiness of participants of the TEPs. As a result, a significant amount of the professional development articles published between 2000-2010 in Teaching and Teacher Education were dedicated to exploring professional learning and support for beginning and pre-service teachers (Avalos, 2010).

Ten years of research regarding professional development is substantial, which is why the researcher opted to add to the body of knowledge that focuses on non-preservice teachers that continue to participate in JEPD in order to grow professionally.

Professional development is a strategy used in education to improve the instructional practices of teachers. Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) explain that effective professional development not only enhances teacher practices, but also improves student learning outcomes as well. Support of professional development is acknowledged throughout education reform and is also characterized as “one of the most critical targets of education reform,” (Desimone, 2009, p. 181). Education reform movements can be credited for the attention that professional development is receiving. It is due to the expectations placed on increasing student achievement that has now made improving teacher practices a priority (Borko, 2009).

Brief History: The Impact of Education Reform on Professional Development for Teachers

Prior to the 1960s, the idea of developing teachers was non-existent. Hargreaves (2000) refers to this as the pre-professional age, which describes the culture of education prior to education reform as teachers feeling as if “there is little to learn in teaching” and students are “learning impoverished” because instruction consists of reciting and rote memorization (Hargreaves, 2000, p. 155). Historically, pre-service teachers engaged in professional development by observing the instructional practices of their classroom teachers, and in-service teachers did not engage in professional development at all (Hargreaves, 2000). The need to advance the system of education led to the transformation of the system as a whole. Students began to be viewed as future contributors to society and teachers were viewed as the catalyst to making this a reality. This idea, along with education reform, led to the concept of teacher development, where teachers would be provided education and professional development to ensure that they would be qualified to educate students and prepare them to be productive members of a growing society, a concept that was not considered prior to education reform. Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) stated “if you want a return, you have to make an investment” (p. 1).

It was during the 1960s, when the government interjected a contrasting view of providing learning opportunities as a way of meeting the needs of the students. This marked the emergence of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), and as a result, the concept of professional development and teacher learning began to take form. It is because of education reform movements, such as ESEA of 1965, that higher expectations were placed on student achievement, which in turn placed emphasis on improving teacher practices (Borko, 2009). Hargreaves (2000) calls this stage in education the autonomous professional. The thought

behind this stage is that teachers can be trusted to do their jobs because they have received the proper education to support their practice. This promoted a form of classroom instruction that was isolating in nature, which may have been a direct result of the traditional form of professional developments, or workshops that teachers were receiving to enhance their instructional practices during 1970s and 1980s (Hargreaves, 2000). Because the workshop approach to professional development is isolating in nature, as it occurs as a single event, teachers also isolated their practice in this way during the age of the autonomous professional.

The next wave of education reform came in 2001 with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). It was during this time that the teaching profession shifted to the age of the collegial professional (Hargreaves, 2000). The age of the collegial professional emerged during the 1980s as a result of the changing environment of the classroom. Hargreaves (2000) attributes these changes to content, inclusion, personal needs of the students, multicultural diversity, and varying demands of leadership. No longer is the one size fits all approach to teaching applicable. Students during this stage of professionalism are a diverse group with different educational and personal needs that teachers during this time realized are their responsibility to fulfill or address. As the role of the teacher developed, so did professional development. Teachers during this stage began to develop collaborative professional communities as a form of professional development to assist in adapting to their changing environments (Hargreaves, 2000). Teachers navigating through this transformative process of seeking collaborative professional development opportunities, as opposed to working in isolation, were improving their ability to adapt and still effectively teach in this changing environment (Ingvarson et al., 2005). Although autonomy was still present, collaboration amongst teachers was also very present (Hargreaves, 2005; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016).

With a culture that promotes collaboration as a form of professional development, teachers can share best practices with other colleagues. “It’s no use having brilliance if it is trapped in a pinhole camera of a classroom” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 9). It was during this stage of professionalism for teachers that promoted professional development in the form of collaborative teams. Working within a culture that promotes collaboration places a focus on improving every teacher, not the individual teacher, for the greater good of teaching as a profession.

The age of the collegial professional identifies another moment in history where the culture of education responded to the need and desire for change during times of uncertainty and educational reform. This stage resulted in building a culture of collaborative communities in response to the difficulties that teachers were facing with the change in education and the change in their classrooms. Teachers during the mid to late 1980s responded to the change in education by changing their professional practice, which continued to support the view of teaching being an actual profession that requires knowledge, skill, and practice, all components fostered through professional development.

The changes in the structure of education, such as new curriculums, the creation and implementation of standards, and standardized assessments all contributed to how teacher expectations have changed, which increased the support required to accommodate these expectations, which contributed to the identification of teaching as a profession due to the development of professional development opportunities to support the growing needs of teachers (Hargreaves, 2000). This is reflected in the post-professional stage of the teaching profession, which continues to transform the teachers who are now deemed worthy of the investment (Hargreaves, 2000; Fullman & Hargreaves, 2016).

In more recent years, the United States government revisited education reform with the amendment of the ESEA of 1965 by Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. When Former President Barack Obama, signed this amendment, the government assumed the responsibility of failing to fully support teachers in the area of professional learning, which directly impacts the preparation of students for college and career readiness (CCR) (“Teachers Matter,” 2012). With this shift in education reform, the ESSA of 2015 outlines its support of developing teachers using effective professional learning opportunities. Part A, Title II of this act clearly outlines the necessity of support for teachers by way of professional development opportunities in order to improve student learning outcomes (“Teachers Matter,” 2012). The literature and education reform both speak to the importance of professional development when grappling with the idea of maintaining high standards in the teaching profession, improving the instructional practices of teachers and to support and increase student achievement.

It is because of educational reform movements, such as ESEA of 1965, NCLB of 2001 and ESSA of 2015 that higher expectations have been placed on teacher quality and student achievement, which in turn has placed emphasis on improving teacher practices (Borko, 2009). In addition, Ingvarson et al. (2005) states that professional development is viewed as key component in enhancing “teaching and learning in our schools” (p. 2). As a result of this new idea of supporting teachers with learning opportunities, evidence has been offered to support what effective professional development should encompass in order to grow teachers.

Defining Effective Professional Development

The literature revealed five common features that are reflected in effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011). The following

paragraphs are structured to address the identified features of effective professional development programming.

Content Focus. According to the literature, content focus is considerate of the content that students are learning, and not primarily on the strategies in which teachers use to teach content (Desimone, 2011). Although, it is important to note that granted, teachers increasing their knowledge of the content to deliver to students is at the forefront of effective professional development, it is also common for the same professional developments to ensure that teachers also have the skills that support teachers in this effort as well (Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi & Gallagher, 2007).

Active learning. The way teachers engage and interact during professional development is a part of the learning process. Active learning suggests that teachers are all but passive in this process (Desimone, 2011). Examples of active learning provided by Desimone (2011) included observation and feedback sessions, presentations by teachers, and analyzing student work. Penuel et al. (2007) suggests that there is a relationship between teachers engaging in active learning during professional learning opportunities and student learning.

Coherence. What teachers receive in professional developments should be consistent to what they are receiving in their schools, on the district level, and from all other professional developments that they may engage. This does not mean that each teacher's learning experience should be a replica of the other, but it does mean that the goals of the professional development should align with the goals of the district (Penuel et al., 2007). Teacher instructional goals are influenced highly by policy and district initiatives. As a result, the professional developments that teachers participate in should service those goals.

Duration. For professional development to be effective, research mandates that it has to be consistent for at least one semester with a minimum of 20 contact hours (Desimone, 2011). Research supports the idea of continuous professional development as it serves as a form of support for teachers during the implementation phase of what they have learned, or are learning, from the professional development (Kubitskey, 2006).

Collective Participation. Desimone (2011, p. 29) defines collective participation as, “Groups of teachers from the same grade, subject, or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community.”

Desimone (2011) concludes that these attributes are considered the core features that all effective professional development should encompass regardless of the activity or the structure of the professional learning opportunity. Desimone (2009) further proposes these features as a conceptual framework that will serve as a consistent model to develop effective professional development regardless of the type of professional learning (see Figure 2).

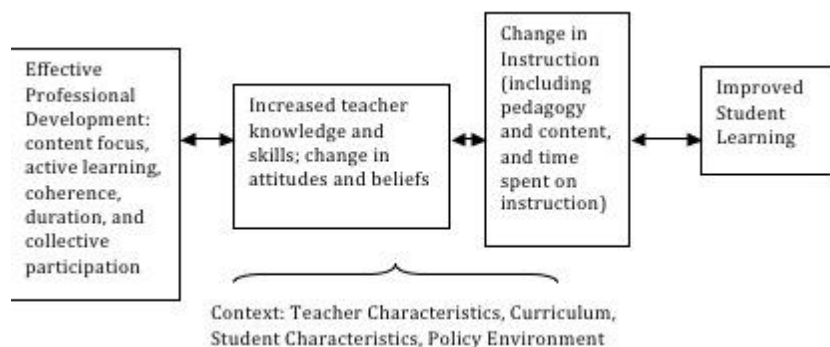


Figure 2. Proposed Core Conceptual Framework for Studying the Effects of Professional Development of Teachers and Students. Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers’ professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational researcher*, 38(3), 181-199.

Job-Embedded Professional Development

Professional development is viewed as being necessary for the continuous development of the instructional practices of teachers to the point that the government revisited its longstanding definition in 2015 and revised the meaning of professional development outlined in No Child Left Behind of 2001 (NCLB) with the amendment by ESSA of 2015. This revision opened up the definition of professional development “to ensure that professional development activities sustained (not stand alone, 1-day, or short-term workshops), intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused” (“A New Vision for Professional Development,” 2017).

Penuel et al. (2007) identify the workshop concept of professional development as the traditional approach to professional development. Reigeluth (2012) references the one-size-fits-all idea of instruction, or the traditional approach, as what was developed during the industrial age when individual needs in education were not considered. This approach is short-term to the learning process. Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) add to the understanding of the traditional approach to professional learning as not being content specific, lacking in duration, discontinuous, isolating and not supportive of teachers.

The alternative identified in the new definition of professional development references what is called the reform-based approach to professional development. The reform-based approach to professional development is considered more effective in comparison to the traditional approach because it provides “more in-depth engagement than is typically provided in the standard workshop given to teachers at the beginning of an initiative” (Penuel et al., 2007, p. 928). Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, and Yoon (2001) add to this understanding of the reform-approach to professional development by identifying characteristics of this approach to

include mentoring, coaching, and teacher study groups. All of which are inclusive of job-embedded professional learning, which identifies the learning process for teachers as day-to-day experiences that are embedded in teacher practices that occur during the process of teaching (Hirsh, 2009). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) and Hirsh (2009) emphasize the idea that the most impactful forms of professional development are those that are content specific, student focused, and enable teachers to develop aptitude to facilitate instruction in specified areas of need.

The revised definition of professional development “calls for every educator to engage in professional learning at the school as part of the workday” (Hirsh, 2009, p. 10). No longer are these opportunities for professional learning isolated occurrences, but integrated components of the workday for teachers that allow opportunities for teachers to engage in school-level professional development inside of the classroom. Additionally, Croft et al. (2010) add that job-embedded professional developments take the shape of “formal and informal social interactions among teachers, situated in the context of their school and the classrooms in which they teach and distributed across the entire staff” (p. 5).

Job-embedded professional development experiences are denoted in the literature as being a notable strategy because it gives school districts the ability to tailor such practices so that they not only align what is mandated through education reform, but also take into consideration the specific needs of schools and their teachers in order to build a tailored job-embedded professional learning model (“A New Vision for Professional Development,” 2017). Other research concurs with the idea of differentiating education and training with models that allow for “tailoring methods to particular situations” (Reigeluth, 2012, p.2).

Varying Forms of Job-Embedded Professional Development

Job-embedded professional development has been effective in improving teacher quality. There are varying forms of JEPD that offer teachers opportunities to improve teacher instructional practices that are “situated inside of the classrooms and schools” (Croft et al., 2010, p. 2). Croft et al. (2010), Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) and Diaz-Maggioli (2003) all provide a concise list of common professional learning opportunities that fall in the realm of job-embedded professional development: action research, case discussions, coaching, critical friend groups, data teams/assessment development, examining student work/tuning protocol, implementing individual professional growth/learning plans, lesson study, mentoring, portfolios, professional learning communities and study groups.

Action Research. Action research is when teachers focus on a specific area in their practice to improve upon on by employing theory and data to transform their practice (Croft et al., 2010; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003).



Figure 3. Action Research Process. Adapted from Diaz-Maggioli, G.H. (2003). Options for teacher professional development. *English Teacher Forum*, 41(2), 2-13.

Case Discussion. Case discussion allow teachers to become the observer of instruction that will allow opportunities of reflection that the teacher can then apply to improving their own practices inside of the classroom (Croft et al., 2010).

Coaching. Coaching is working with an expert in the field that provides ongoing support from observations to modeling that all work together to improve a specific area of practice for a teacher (Croft et al., 2010).

Critical Friends Groups. Critical friends' groups is a collaborative effort for teachers to work together to analyze artifacts for the purpose of improving instructional practices of teachers (Croft et al., 2010).

Data Teams/Assessment Development. Data teams are another collaborative effort of teachers that focus on assessments and the data collected as a result in order to inform future instructional decisions and assessments (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Examining Student Work/Tuning Protocol. Tuning protocol is collaborative in nature as well. This type of JEPD is conducted for the purpose of analyzing student work in order to address student misconceptions and to inform future instructional practices of the teacher (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Implementing Individual Professional Growth/Learning Plans. Learning plans are generated by teachers who collaborate with an instructional leader to receive professional development and support in a self-identified area (Croft et al., 2010, Diaz-Maggioli, 2003).

Lesson Study. Lesson study is another collaborative effort that allows teachers observe and reflect on the practice of their colleagues and provide constructive feedback with the intentions of improving their instructional practice (Croft et al., 2010).

Mentoring. Mentoring is common for new teachers and provides a means of support in the area of instructional routines and practices (Croft et al, 2010).

Portfolios. Portfolios are the collection of work and artifacts for teachers to be able to reflect upon and use as information when assessing growth over time (Croft et al., 2010).

Professional Learning Communities. Professional learning communities (PLCs) are a collective effort amongst teachers and content area leads that are designed to foster creative

spaces to improve teachers instructional practices (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Study Groups. Study groups, also known as collaborative study groups, consists of a maximum of ten participants whose long-term focus is to improve school-wide or classroom practices through the engagement of educational research, reflections and discussions that are solution focused (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009, Diaz-Maggioli, 2003).

The language found to be repeated within the descriptors of the list comprised by Croft et al. (2010) includes the following: collaborate, discussions, JEPD, support, reflections, coach/mentor, growth/development, analysis and data (see Figure 4).

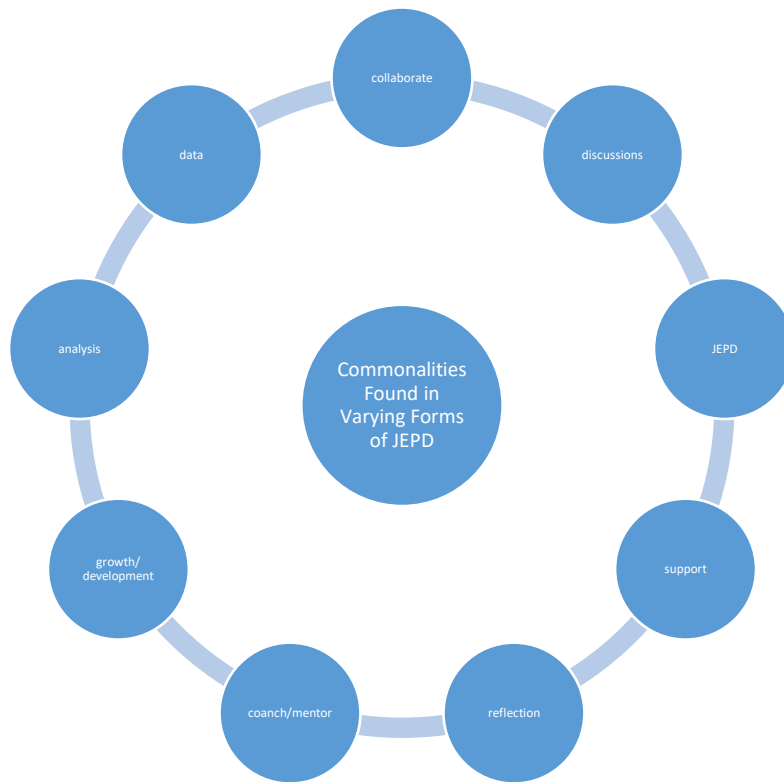


Figure 4. Commonalities of Varying Forms of JEPD.

There is a clear alignment to the reform-based approach within each type of JEPD outlined by Croft et al. (2010), as well as an alignment with what research identifies as effective professional development. The repeated language found in the varying forms of the JEPD listed by Croft et al. (2010) is reflective of what research has aligned to effective professional development as well (Desimone 2009). This further supports the ideas of utilizing effective professional development that caters to the needs of the teacher, which are situated by nature.

The Connection: Job-Embedded Professional Development and Effective Professional Development

The revised meaning of professional development is closely aligned to the conceptual framework suggested by Desimone (2009). The literature reviewed on job-embedded professional development revealed an apparent alignment with the revised meaning of professional learning to what Birman et al. (2000), Desimone (2009), and Desimone (2011) discuss as the common features that are reflected in effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation.

According to the literature, content focus is an area that considers the content that students are learning and does not place emphasis primarily on the strategies in which teachers use to teach content (Desimone, 2011). Regarding the revised meaning of professional development, content focus and job-embedded professional development are closely aligned. Just as content focus specifically references the subject matter of what is taught, job-embedded professional development speaks to the learning of each teacher participating as being classroom focused (“A New Vision for Professional Development,” 2017).

Active learning suggests that teachers are all but passive in this process (Desimone, 2011). The newly adapted meaning of professional learning indicates that it is more rigorous, which requires active engagement on the part of the participant.

According to research, duration is imperative to the effectiveness of any professional development (Desimone, 2011). The updated definition of professional development speaks to the expectation of professional learning existing outside of the one-day workshop framework that is typical of the more traditional model of professional learning. Desimone’s (2011) suggested

framework for effective professional development concurs, as well as suggests that professional learning should extend through the semester with a minimum of 20 contact hours.

Desimone (2011) references collective participation as teachers, of the same content area, school, and grade collaborating and building learning communities. The newly adapted definition of professional learning places emphasis on professional learning being more collaborative, offering teachers an opportunity to work with other teachers that teach the same content, on the same grade levels, which also emphasizes community (“A New Vision for Professional Development,” 2017).

Table 1

Core Features of Effective Professional Development

Adapted from Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. Phi Delta Kappan, 92(6), 68-71.

Content Focus:	Professional development activities should focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content.
Active learning:	Teachers should have opportunities to get involved, such as observing and receiving feedback analyzing student work, or making presentations, as opposed to passively sitting through lectures.
Coherence:	What teachers learn in any professional development activity should be consistent with other professional development, with their knowledge and beliefs, and with school, districts, and state reforms and policies.
Duration:	Professional developments should be spread over a semester and should include 20 hours or more of contact time.
Collective participation:	Groups of teachers from the same grade, subject or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community.

The revision to such a long-standing definition of professional learning respectively adds dimension to the professional development model that school districts have engaged in for years. As a result, several varying professional development models are now deemed potentially effective and necessary in order to meet the criteria of, what is now, the most updated education reform.

Studies That Link the Core Five Features of Effective Professional Development to Job-Embedded Professional Development

Several studies were discovered that placed high importance on the core features of effective professional development. To begin, Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon and Birman (2002), advocate for the use of the five core features of effective professional development. Desimone et al. (2002) initially conducted a study with a sample size of 207 teachers in order to determine if, a then, six identified key features of professional development “could be hypothesized as effective in improving teaching practices” (p. 83). The six key features referenced in this study include:

1. reform type (e.g. study group vs. workshop)
2. duration
3. collective participation
4. active learning
5. coherence
6. content focus

Desimone et al. (2002) concluded that teacher learning utilizing content focus and active learning positively affects teacher implementation of new practices and the impact of the professional development on the instructional practices of its participants.

It is important to note that the key features identified in Desimone's et al. (2002) study were the prelude to the five core features that Desimone (2009) and Desimone (2011) advocate for researchers and creators of teacher learning opportunities to use as a framework to develop professional development to aid in the measurement of its effects on changing the instructional practices of classroom teachers (Desimone et al., 2002).

Ingvarson et al. (2005) conducted an analysis of four studies that incorporated the core features of effective professional development. Each of the four studies targeted improving teacher quality in Australia by structuring professional learning opportunities around content focus, active learning, duration, and collective participation. The researchers considered these factors as the major components of their analysis and concluded that the impact on teacher learning was consistently significant between all four studies (Ingvarson et al., 2005).

Penuel et al. (2007) explored the effectiveness of professional development that used a theoretical framework that emphasized content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation. The study surveyed 454 teacher participants of professional learning targeting science inquiry and concluded that creating a professional development framework around the core features found in effective professional development, was significant to not only the teacher learning process but also played a role in whether teachers actually began the implementation process in their classrooms, which impacts student achievement (Penuel et al., 2007).

Additional research used the five core features of effective professional development in a longitudinal multiple cohort design designated to compare K-3 math teachers participating in a math professional development, entitled *Primarily Math*, to a comparison group. The purpose was to measure its impact on the following: "change teacher knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs, as

well as student growth in an assessment of early mathematics ability,” (Kutaka, Smith, Albano, Edwards, Ren, Beattie, Lewis, Heaton & Stroup, 2017, p. 142). Kutaka et al. (2017) concluded that there was a positive correlation between the Primarily Math professional development and teacher attitudes, as well as student achievement. The following chart outlines how this study aligned its professional development model with the five core features of effective professional development.

	<i>Primarily Math</i> course content and structure	Examples
Content Focus	*Participants took two graduate-level courses designed to strengthen conceptual knowledge of number and operation, including base-10/place value, algorithms, and rational numbers (Summer Institute 1). *The third course extended into mathematics beyond Grade 3, including more rational numbers as well as geometry & algebra (Summer Institute 2).	* <i>A particular brand of chicken nuggets come in boxes of 6, 9, and 20. What is the largest number of chicken nuggets you cannot order exactly? How do you know?</i> * <i>Laura says rectangles with area 16 always have a bigger perimeter than rectangles with area 12. What would you say to Laura?</i>
Active Learning	Large group lecture Small group Individual work Group and individual consultation with instructor or teaching assistant upon request	*Teachers video-taped themselves using two Talk Moves (Chapin, O’Connor, & Anderson, 2009), transcribed video, and completed self-reflection based on structured prompts. *Brought videos and reflections to PD day and watched themselves alongside peers for debrief. Sample prompt: <i>“How do the Talk Moves help you to understand a child’s mathematical ideas?”</i>
Coherence	*Connections between math and math pedagogy coursework *Intentional promotion of National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Practice Standards when approaching assignments *In 2010, Common Core State Standards rolled out and its content integrated into coursework	*The Child Study was a long-term class project that required teachers to observe a target child over 8-10 weeks and situate their learning within Clements and Sarama’s (2009) trajectories. *Unit planning assignment where teachers used local curriculum
Duration	*Summer Institutes 2 weeks long, each 8 hr days	*A minimum of 80 contact hours during each summer institute. Homework each night, where

	*Long-term projects, with built-in opportunities for reflection and revision take place over the course of the semester (For a more in-depth example, see Fleharty & Edwards, 2013)	instructor and teaching assistants were available to support individual and group efforts at completing homework. *Long-term projects assigned over course of school year. Teachers received instructor and peer feedback at midpoint to deadline.
Collective Participation	*In-class assignments facilitated collaboration between teachers who taught at same or different grade levels *Cohorts built around teachers working in same school district *Multiple teachers at same school (different grades) participated	*During academic-year courses, teachers provided feedback to peers on various assignments (e.g., professional writings) before submitting to instructors. *In math courses, teachers worked almost exclusively in cooperative groups to solve problems and make sense of multiple-solution paths.

Note. PD = professional development.

Figure 5. How Primarily Math Content and Structure Align with the Core Features of Effective Professional Development. Adapted from Kutaka, T.T., Smith, W.M., Albano, A.D., Edwards, C.P., Ren, L. Beattie, H.L., & Stroup, W.W. (2017). Connecting teacher professional development and student mathematics achievement. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(2), 140-154.

The commonality that exist amongst the above mentioned studies is that they link their models of professional development to other “high quality” professional developments as each utilizes some or all of the components that are included in the framework that encompasses the five features of effective professional development (content focus, active learning, coherence, duration, and collective participation), as prescribed by Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) and Desimone (2009) (Kutaka, et al., 2017). This is also a quality shared by JEPD, which can also be linked to the features of effective professional development.

Empirical Research Regarding Perceptions of JEPD Guided by a Qualitative Approach

An exploration into research centered on studies that identify using a qualitative approach to look at teachers' experiences with professional development is the purpose of this section of the literature review. The results rendered four empirical studies that are relevant to the topic of teachers' perceptions on the impact of JEPD. In an effort to explore the existing research on the topic of elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of JEPD and its impact, the following will take a close look into the topic, research questions, sample/participants, setting, methods, data collection, data analysis, validity of study, as well as findings in the existing research.

Hall, Chai and Albrecht (2016) conducted a qualitative research study for the purpose of exploring how elementary teachers alone describe their experience with nutrition education. Purposive criterion sampling was used to identify participants. The researchers limited the study to kindergarten, first and second grade teachers in one school district who had a minimum one year of teaching experiences with a specific nutrition curriculum. This yielded a sample size of 10 teachers (n=10). The methods used in this study include the following: identification of research bias prior to contact with the participants, semi-structured interviews, transcription of interviews, classroom observations, participant written reflections following each classroom observation. Hall et al. (2016) utilized Moustaka's method of inductive data analysis, which included coding with labeling of transcribed interviews, eliminating statements that were not relevant to understanding the phenomenon, clustering then thematic labeling initial codes that later resulted in 164 categories that were later reduced to 5 main themes related to the experiences of the participants. The researchers used member checking as the validation technique used for this study. The findings of this empirical research study identified teachers'

belief in the benefits of teaching the curriculum as well as the barriers that exist to teaching the curriculum.

In another qualitative study reviewed, the researcher centered the study on exploring high school teachers' experiences with professional development (Adams, 2014). Like Hall et al. (2016), criterion sampling was used, which yielded in a sample size of 3 for the semi-structured interviews (n=3), and 2 for the focus group (n=2) (Adams, 2014). Adams (2014) used the three series interview format prescribed by Seidman (2006). Like other qualitative research reviewed (Hall et al., 2016; Thurgate, 2018), Adams (2014) also recorded and transcribed all interviews, which then led to the completion of a thematic analysis of the recordings and transcriptions of the one-on-one conversational interviews. Also, like other qualitative research, Adams (2014) used member checking as a validation strategy (Hall et al., 2016). Adams (2014) found that the participants of the study connected effective teaching practices and developing professionally with effective professional development. The participants also did not define traditional models of professional development as effective and connected with professional development and not with being professionally developed.

Similarly, researchers in nurse education conducting research using a qualitative approach, used similar methods to Hall et al. (2016) and Adams (2014). Thurgate (2018) focused on the healthcare setting to conduct an empirical study in the United Kingdom. Thurgate (2018) followed health care assistants through the learning process for two years as they progressed to assistant practitioners. The researchers also used purposive criterion sampling (Hall et al., 2016; Adams, 2014) which yielded a sample size of 8 (n=8). Like Adams (2014), Thurgate (2018) used a three series interview format, very much like the three series interview format prescribed by Seidman (2006) to conduct one-to-one conversational interviews. Each

interview was recorded and transcribed for the purpose of completing a thematic analysis. The findings discovered a holistic understanding of the experience and perspectives of classroom teachers and revealed that several unknown barriers exist with the concept of learning in the workplace that were not otherwise apparent (Thurgate, 2018).

Additional research was reviewed that focused on teachers' perceptions of the impact of professional development in a developing nation using a qualitative approach. Mohan, Lingam and Chand (2017) explored the impact PD has on teaching and learning in Fiji, including defining effectiveness or ineffectiveness, as well as challenges. Like previous research studies that utilized a qualitative approach (Hall et al., 2016; Adams, 2014; & Thurgate, 2018), Mohan et al. (2017) employed criterion sampling of two case study schools that represent both urban and rural populations, which resulted in the completion of semi-structured interviews of 32 teachers (n=32), thematic analysis, as well as document analysis of materials related to the professional development experienced by teachers. The findings revealed that differentiation in PD is necessary, but the collaborative nature of PD is beneficial to all.

Each research study reviewed has roots in the realm of qualitative research for the purpose of revealing the descriptions of the experiences of the participants (Moustakas, 1994). The overall idea supporting the efforts of the empirical studies reviewed places the focus on the teacher engaged in the phenomenon of professional development, which supports the use of criterion sampling in each of the research studies reviewed. Most of the research reviewed focused on smaller participant sizes, while one chose to go larger in comparison. This signifies the flexibility that exists in qualitative approaches to research. Other commonalities that live in the research studies reviewed include the methodological choices of the researchers, and finally the intentionality behind capturing the essence of the experience of the participants.

The research reviewed looked at teacher perspectives on concepts that impact teachers and students. This research study will add to the existing body of work an in-depth look into literacy JEPD from the perspective of elementary literacy teachers in Southwest Tennessee. As well as explore the impact of literacy JEPD from this same perspective.

Conclusion

The body of literature reviewed by the researcher identifies with the fact that although professional development was not relevant at the onset of education as we have come to know it (Hargreaves, 2000), it has come to be a necessary component of our educational system (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). As a result, it is worthy of measuring its effectiveness on several levels. Throughout the literature reviewed, professional development is prescribed as most effective when job-embedded, which emphasizes the importance of the position of the professional development in which teachers are engaged (ESSA, 2015; Hirsh, 2009; Teaching at Risk, 2004). It is equally as important to hear from teachers that engage in JEPD to determine in what ways this type of professional development is effective for its participants and the impact it has on the participants.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

As mentioned in chapter 2, the literature reviewed acknowledges that the definition of effective professional development has evolved to include components that align with elements like that which is reflected in job-embedded professional development (JEPD). Research has deemed these components to produce effective learning environments for teachers and ensure a higher rate of implementation within classrooms (Desimone et al., 2002; Penuel, 2007). The purpose of this qualitative research study was to describe teachers' experiences with literacy focused JEPD and the perceptions they have of the impact of literacy focused JEPD.

This chapter includes a description of the research design, methodology, methods, ethical considerations, site selection, and the participation and identification selection process. Data analysis procedures will also be described in this chapter.

Research Design

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), qualitative research “takes place in the natural world, draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants in the study, focuses on context, is emergent and evolving, and is fundamentally interpretive” (p. 2). Using this approach to frame the proposed research study, the researcher was able to explore the phenomenon of JEPD from the perspective of teachers as participants of JEPD. Employing a qualitative research approach supported teachers as they reflected on their understandings of their experiences with JEPD, which helped teachers in describing their experiences with JEPD and its impact (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

To understand and describe literacy teachers' experiences with JEPD and the perceptions they have of the impact of JEPD, a constructionism epistemological stance was used to support

the qualitative case study research framework employed to explore the inquiry. The motivation surrounding the design of the study was to create opportunities for teachers, as participants in JEPD, to reflect on previous and current experiences to uncover the meanings constructed during the process of participating in this type of contextualized learning. The researcher also wanted to discover how these experiences with JEPD impacted their instructional practices. The goal was to create a research design “that links the data to be collected (and the conclusions to be drawn) to the initial questions” (Yin, 2003, p. 19). The chosen methodology and methods, as well as the procedures that were used during the analysis and interpretation phase of the research process aided the researcher in systematically exploring the following research questions that guided the study:

Research Question 1 (RQ1) What are teachers’ perceptions of job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are teachers’ perceptions of the benefits of job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

Research Question 3 (RQ3) How does job-embedded professional development, in which teachers have been participants, impact teachers?

Research Question 4 (RQ4) What are teachers’ perceptions of what makes JEPD effective?

Methodology

Methodology is “a reasonable plan for gathering and analyzing information that responds to a line of research inquiry” (Egbert & Sanden, 2014, p. 75). One way to explain this concept is to look at the methodology as the explanation. The methodology explains why the researcher is using a method to obtain the data from the participants of the research project.

Qualitative case study is the methodology that was used to describe literacy teachers’ perceptions

of how literacy focused JEPD impacted their instructional practices. The researcher chose this methodology because case study considers the uniqueness of the inquiry, appreciates in-depth descriptions of small samples (bounded system), and is supported with methods that allow a deep dive into understanding the phenomenon (case) (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2003). Case study is an “in-depth analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, 38). The case is the “unit of study” while the bounded system is “what is being studied” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The case of the researcher’s inquiry was literacy focused JEPD, while the bounded system was the elementary literacy teacher who participated in literacy focused JEPD.

The type of qualitative case study selected was based on the intent or purpose of the research. As a result, of the three forms of case studies presented in the literature, the researcher used an interpretative case study for this research study. Using interpretive case study, as prescribed by Merriam (2001), allowed for the collection of the type of data that provided “rich, thick descriptions” (p. 38) of the experiences of the participants engaging in literacy focused JEPD. Because the intention of the research study was to describe how elementary literacy teachers experience literacy focused JEPD using their descriptions of their experiences in order to understand its impact, this type of descriptive data supported the researcher in collecting data regarding the phenomenon of literacy focused JEPD. It also supported the analysis and interpretation of the data collected from teachers who engaged in the same phenomenon, literacy focused JEPD.

Research suggests that JEPD is effective because it is situated in the natural environment of teachers and promotes collaborative contextualized learning. This type of professional learning allows for immediate connections and meaning to be made because it is relatable, and as a result, increases the likelihood of teachers implementing effective practices inside of the

classroom. The qualitative case study approach used for the purposes of this research study allowed the participants to reflect on these collaborative moments to examine and describe the meanings constructed while experiencing literacy focused JEPD to further describe the impact of literacy focused JEPD.

The situated learning approach insists that JEPD is effective because teachers are constantly in the mode of making meaning of the phenomenon of JEPD, implying that this is a part of the process which makes it effective. The phenomenon of JEPD is meaningful because it is contextualized, it is situated in the workplace, and as a result, teachers can make sense of the process because it is applicable, meaningful and ultimately effective. Conducting a qualitative case study allowed the researcher to focus on the phenomenon of JEPD as experienced by a select group of teachers to describe the meaning-making process that took place during these experiences with JEPD. This then aided in identifying the impact of literacy focused JEPD on instructional practices of teachers as participants.

Merriam (2009) concludes that “a case study is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 40). In relation to this study, the case is the literacy focused JEPD, and the bounded system is the group of participants that engaged in literacy focused JEPD (group of teachers as participants). Conducting a qualitative case study allows the researcher to look at the phenomenon of JEPD from the perspective of teachers in order to describe what that experience means and how this impacts the instructional practices of the participants. Merriam-Webster defines perception as “quick, acute, and intuitive cognition” and “a capacity for comprehension” (“Perception,” 2019). The research study relied on this definition and utilized case study as the methodology to explore teachers’ experiences with literacy focused JEPD.

Research Setting

The setting for the research study was Southwest Tennessee, which includes a total of 21 counties. The researcher narrowed the focus of the research setting to the largest county in Southwest Tennessee, which is Shelby County. Shelby County has a population of 935,764 residents (United States Census Bureau, 2019). The researcher's decision to narrow the focus of the research setting was made based on the location of the researcher and accessibility to the subject pool. Shelby County has seven public school districts that has a total student population of 171.6 thousand students enrolled in kindergarten through high school ("School Enrollment in Shelby County, Tennessee," 2018). Additionally, the research setting was chosen because the Tennessee Department of Education requires 5 days of professional development by all teachers, which ensures that teachers in this area are exposed to consistent job-embedded professional development (Tennessee Department of Education: Inservice guidelines, 2019). Because consistent exposure to JEPD was a part of the criteria of the purposeful sampling process, choosing this research setting increased the number of qualifying participants for this research study and provided an appropriate subject pool for the research questions.

Participations and Identification Selection

Sample Selection Criteria

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of JEPD. The researcher used criterion purposive sampling to select participants who had "knowledge and experience" with JEPD and instruction (deMarris, 2004, p. 59). The selection criteria of the participants were as follows:

- current elementary literacy teacher employed within an urban school district in this southern state for a minimum of three years

- professional elementary teaching license in elementary education issued by the Department of Education in this southern state (excluding teachers working on an alternate license)
- ongoing participant of literacy focused job-embedded professional development
- meet the yearly average professional development hours as required by this southern state and the urban school district (five days of in-service education annually).

The interview procedure required the participants to respond to questions that were relevant to their life history, as it related to JEPD, as well as past and present experiences with JEPD. For participants to be able to participate in the inquiry, they had to have been currently engaging in JEPD. The three-year requirement was included in the criteria to ensure that each participant possessed a professional teaching license, which added to the trustworthiness of the data collected. Teachers on alternative licenses can teach for up to three years without a professional license but may or may not be held to the same standard as teachers who have a professional teaching license and receive consistent JEPD.

Recruitment

Elementary literacy teachers were identified by using public information available on school-level and district-wide websites as well as the state under study Department of Education website. This information was compiled to create a pool of elementary literacy teachers that were emailed an initial recruitment letter (Appendix A). The recruitment email provided potential participants the opportunity to forward the email about the voluntary research opportunity to other elementary literacy teachers that engaged in literacy focused JEPD. The researcher contacted the subjects that responded to the recruitment email to schedule a face to face meeting or telephone conference via telephone. Each participant requested a telephone conference. The researcher used the same script as outlined in the recruitment email to define

and provide a frame for the study for the candidate. The researcher also used this as an opportunity to respond to any questions that the candidates had at that time regarding their potential commitment to the study. Following this communication, a link to the electronic informed consent (Appendix B) and demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to the candidates' email address. If the candidate chose to agree to be a participant in the study, they selected "Yes" on the electronic informed consent. The subject was then guided to complete the demographic questionnaire on page two of the link provided. If the potential subject chose to not be a participant in the study, they selected "NO" on the electronic informed consent, which then directed them to the option of closing the link.

Number of Participants

Six candidates responded to the recruitment email and were forwarded the link to complete the electronic informed consent and demographic questionnaire. Of the six candidates, five agreed to participate in the study. The researcher purposefully selected three participants for the study in order to capture the in-depth experiences of the participants.

The selection process began with each participant meeting the criteria established, which was communicated in the invitation email and the electronic informed consent. The researcher proceeded to select three participants with varying experiences, as well as participants who were at dissimilar stages in their teaching career. The researcher initially struggled to select the third participant because of trying to fulfill the researcher's immediate view of diversity being ethnicity. Upon review of the demographic data collected from the survey, it was apparent that diversity existed amongst the group by way of the experiences of the participants. As a result, the selection of the third participant was chosen based on the diversity that existed within the experiences of the participants.

Because this was a qualitative case study, consideration of sample selection began at “the case level” (Merriam, 2009). The researcher identified the case of literacy JEPD as the phenomenon of study, and as a result, was able to identify the bounded system (elementary literacy teachers as participants of literacy JEPD) that would be able to provide the data necessary to explore the topic. Purposive criterion sampling of elementary literacy teachers was used to identify participants, which allowed a more precise focus of the sample that the researcher wanted to interview (Merriam, 2009). The number of participants was purposefully selected and smaller than that of quantitative inquiries, which typically relies on larger sample sizes that are randomly selected (deMarrais, 2004; Patton, 1990). The maximum number of participants for the in-depth qualitative interviews was limited to three participants (n=3) for the purpose of allowing the researcher to dive deep into discovering the meanings constructed from the experiences of the participants. Expanding the number of participants would not have allowed for this type of exploration into the situatedness of the case of JEPD and the bounded system, which was the literacy teachers as participants of literacy JEPD. According Merriam (2009), the size of the sample is relative to the intentionality of the study. The researcher limited the sample to three participants. This allowed the researcher to take an in-depth look into the case of JEPD and teachers’ perceptions on the impact that JEPD had (Patton 1990). Continuing to provide anonymity to the participants, each participant was provided with the following pseudonyms once data was collected: Participant One, Participant Two and Participant Three.

Methods of Data Collection

“Methods can be defined as the specific procedures that accomplish the task of gathering and analyzing the data in a research study” (Egbert & Sanden, 2014, p. 75). The methods used for this qualitative research study include audio recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews,

analytic memos, a researcher's journal and field notes, all of which captured the researcher's ideas, reactions, thoughts and understandings throughout the research process. Because the researcher was seeking information that required the participants to reflect on their experiences based on their interactions and the meanings constructed, as a result of their participation in JEPD, the chosen methods allowed the type of data needed to be captured in order for legitimate understandings that reflected both the points of view of the participants, as well as the researcher's reactions and thoughts throughout the research process.

Because the study required a collection of data that provided detailed descriptions of the experiences of teachers who participate in JEPD, the researcher asked participants to complete a demographic questionnaire to collect descriptive participant data, which aided in choosing a diverse subject pool. The researcher conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews of the participants to gather data that described the phenomenon of their participation in JEPD. The interview was a key component of the research process because it not only provided a platform for the participant to reflect and provide an account of their experiences, but it also served as the method that made their experiences valid (Stringer, 2014). Each interview was audio recorded and later transcribed by the researcher.

Demographic Questionnaire

The information obtained by the researcher from the demographic questionnaire (Appendix C), was used for the purposes of describing the participants, as well as a tool that the researcher used to cross reference with the criteria established for participation. Using the information from the demographic questionnaire, the researcher was able to choose a diverse sample for the research study.

Interviewing

An interview is a process in which a researcher and participant engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study. These questions usually ask participants for their thoughts, opinions, perspectives, or descriptions of specific experiences.

(deMarrais, 2004, p. 54)

Interviews, although present in other approaches to research, are the “central method of data collection” for qualitative research (Savin-Baden & Major, 2014, p. 357). Seidman (2013) identifies interviewing as the primary method to be utilized in educational research when the inquiry requires an in-depth look into the experiences of people. The researcher selected interviews as the method of choice because it allowed the space to investigate the experiences of the participants and how they made meaning of their experiences with JEPD. These detailed descriptions allowed the researcher to understand how their engagement with JEPD impacted their instructional practices.

In-depth semi-structured interviews. The primary method of data collection was in-depth semi-structured interviews. The researcher relied on an interview protocol that consisted of preset questions that guided all three participants in the process of being able to discover their life-history with JEPD (first interview), the details of their experiences with JEPD (second interview) and the participants’ reflections on the meaning of their experiences with JEPD (third interview) (Seidman, 2013). Savin-Baden and Major (2014) recommend this approach because it narrows the scope of the interview and keeps it focused.

Because each interview had a purpose, according to the interview procedure selected, the researcher used the semi-structured interview process to remain focused on the inquiry, but also because semi-structured interviews were not restrictive. With this interviewing style, there was

flexibility for the researcher to deviate away from the interview protocol when appropriate (Savin-Baden & Major, 2014). The open-ended questions that the researcher developed for the interview protocols focused on the context and goals of the interviews that evoked responses from the participants that responded to the topic and accomplished the goals of each interview (Savin-Baden & Major, 2014).

Interview procedure. Seidman (2013) prescribes a three-interview series approach that addresses how to conduct interviews in qualitative research to explore and describe “the meaning of people’s experiences” in context when interviewing participants that have shared the same experience (p. 20). Although referenced as a structure for in-depth phenomenological interviews, the researcher deemed this approach as suitable for the research study because it is designed to allow the interviewee to describe in detail their experiences, which was necessary for the research to be able to respond to the inquiry. Structurally, the research process prescribed by Seidman (2013) elicits the information from the interviewee that provided detailed descriptions of the phenomenon of JEPD that was necessary to respond to the inquiry and aligned with the qualitative research approach used to frame the research study.

Seidman (2013) describes a three-interview series, designed for the purpose of conducting three separate in-depth interviews of each participant that explores the phenomenon in context. Seidman (2013) states that the three-interview series “allows both the interviewer and participant to explore the participant’s experience, place it in context, and reflect on its meaning” (p. 20). The researcher employed this three-series interview protocol, which consisted of open-ended questions to explore the full extent of the participants’ past and contemporary experiences with literacy focused JEPD.

The initial interview focused on “putting the participant’s experiences in context of their life history” (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). The purpose of this interview was to gain knowledge of the participant and learn of their life story as it pertained to the case of JEPD. For this research study, the researcher formatted the initial semi-structured interview protocol to learn of the life story of the participants, as it related to their experiences with JEPD. Marshall and Rossman (2016) also emphasize that the first interview is conducted to capture the participants past experiences with the phenomenon.

While the initial interview presented the opportunity for the participants to reflect on their life history with the case of interest, the second interview focused on the present (Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The purpose of the second interview was for the participants to “reconstruct” the key details that were used by them to construct meaning of their present experiences with JEPD in context (Seidman, 2013, p. 21). The details of the participants “present lived experience” with JEPD was the relative focus of the second interview because it was within the details that the participants share about their experiences with JEPD that the researcher found the rich, thick descriptions that were required to satisfy what was needed to fully describe teachers’ perceptions of the case of JEPD and the impact that it has had on their professional lives (Seidman, 2013, p. 21).

Seidman (2013) indicated that the third interview is the time for participants to “reflect on the meaning of their experience” (p. 22). It was important for the third interview to be guided in a way that allowed the participant to place focus on the details of their present experience with JEPD in context (Seidman, 2013). Although similar in many aspects to the second interview, the purpose of the third interview was for the participants to “reflect on the meaning of their experience” (Seidman, 2013, p. 22). Marshall and Rossman (2016) add that it is during the third

and final interview that the first and second interviews are merged to gather a full description of the experience of the participant with the phenomenon.

Seidman (2013) suggests that the three-interview series should be structured according to the needs of the research study. Although there is no one way of structuring the interviewing process utilizing the format suggested, Seidman (2013) does insist that a structure be identified early in the process and remain consistent throughout each interview. In terms of structure regarding the interviewing process, the researcher had a sample of size of three participants, all of which were interviewed following the previously mentioned guidelines of the three-interview series. Each of the interviews were in-depth semi-structured interviews. Each interview was approximately one hour in length and were separated by one week, as suggested by Seidman (2013). This allowed the participants an opportunity to reflect and stay connected to the process. It also provided the researcher with a consecutive three-week window of working with the participants, which allowed the opportunity to build and strengthen the rapport between the researcher and the participants. Utilizing this interview format, along with the one-week space between each interview aided in eliminating the possibility of unforeseen circumstances that could have happened if the interview process had been extended for a longer period (Seidman, 2013).

The interviews took place in a central location agreed upon by both the researcher and the participants within a three-week window.

Table 2

Interview time frame and goals of each in-depth semi-structured interview

Time Frame	Interview Goal	Participants
Week 1	Interview One: Focused Life History	All three participants
Week 2	Interview Two: The Details of the Experience	All three participants
Week 3	Interview Three: Reflection on the meaning	All three participants

Research Journal

It was important to the research process that the researcher maintained a reflective log detailing the thoughts, ideas and experiences of the researcher during various phases of the research process. Creswell (2007) further explains research journals as an approach to data collection. As a result, the researcher maintained a journal to assist in documenting their journey throughout the research process. It is important to note that when the researcher began the analysis phase of the research, the researcher's journal and analytic memos merged. Saldana (2009) emphasizes the point that there is a strong resemblance between the two. As a result, the researcher continued to document the process understanding that there would be some overlap.

Field Notes

The researcher-maintained field notes during the data collection phase of the research process for the purpose of self-reflection. Field notes were recorded on the interview protocols of each participant and served as a running record for the researcher to record ideas, reactions,

and questions that arose during the process of conducting the qualitative interviews with the participants. As suggested by Hesse-Biber (2017), reflexivity was used by the researcher to separate the researcher's position from that of the participant. Hesse-Biber (2017) encouraged this method of reflexivity on personal and professional experiences of the researcher because it allowed the researcher to acknowledge any subjectivity and bias that existed so that it would not interact with the meanings interpreted from the experiences of the participants. Recognizing the researcher's position, while separating it from that of the participant also increased the trustworthiness of the study (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Memos

This was also completed on the soft copies of the interview protocols as the researcher discovered relevant descriptions that were deemed important to the process. As the researcher reviewed data that brought about questions or were similarities or differences became apparent while looking at the data, the researcher-maintained memos to manage these occurrences. The memo took the shape of visual representations, highlighted text and in paragraph format.

Data Analysis

The framework of the research being a constructivist qualitative case study, positioned the research study in the interpretive paradigm as structured for qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As a result of this framework and the positionality of the researcher, the interpretation of the empirical data was influenced by all facets of this framework. "Each interpretive paradigm made particular demands on the researcher, including the questions the researcher asks and the interpretations he or she brings to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 22). The foundational premise that supports situated learning theory identifies contextualized learning that involves social interactions amongst participants, which directly aligns with how

meaning is constructed during this type of activity-based learning (Allal, 2001). All these components guided the data collection process, the process of analysis and the interpretation of the findings, all while the researcher explored the experiences of teacher participants of JEPD.

Because this was a qualitative process, the empirical findings that were collected by way of in-depth semi-structured interviews, transcription of the interviews, memos, field notes and a researcher's journal were used to construct the truth of the participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The seven phases of the analytic procedure identified by Marshall and Rossman (2016, p. 217) were followed:

- (1) organizing the data
- (2) immersion in the data
- (3) generating case summaries and possible categories and themes
- (4) coding the data
- (5) offering interpretations through analytic memos
- (6) searching for alternative understandings, and
- (7) writing the report or other format for presenting the study

The analytic procedure followed by the researcher assisted in maintaining consideration for the data as transcribed to code the data in a way that did not negate the voice of the participant.

First Run Through the Data Techniques

The researcher's initial interactions with the data incorporated techniques that Hesse-Bibber (2017) describes as "first run through the data techniques" (p.311). Integrating these strategies allowed the research to get to know the data. The researcher began to explore the data by listening to the audio recorded interviews prior to beginning the transcription process. After engaging with the data, the researcher recorded observations and questions that arose in the

researcher's journal. The researcher documented the tone of the participants, commonalities in descriptions to remember for later, reoccurring phrases and questions that the researcher revisited later to determine if the participant responded to these wonderings at some point during the interviewing process. Analytic memos that captured words, or ideas that were heard or provoked as a result of initially engaging with the data were recorded using visual representations.

Transcribing the interviews was the next step for the researcher and it was important to remember the interpretive position of the study during the transcription process. The researcher continued the analysis process while transcribing each interview by integrating varying analytic memo techniques which included highlighting moments that were deemed important and consistent amongst the interviews and completing memos to document ideas and questions that emerged during the transcription process (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The researcher created visual representations that assisted with connecting ideas that developed after interviews one and two for each participant were transcribed (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Visual representations were not created for interview three of each participant because the natural flow of the ideas that were recorded began to repeat themselves during interview three. Because nothing new was evident during this process, the researcher discontinued this process of analysis after interview two. This created a visual that allowed the researcher to document commonalities and differences that were recorded for each participant.

Coding the Data

The researcher did not use qualitative analysis software to assist with the process as originally proposed. It became apparent to the researcher that the analysis process happens concurrently with the data collection process and long before the initial undertaking of coding the data. As suggested by Marshall and Rossman (2016), the researcher completed memos

throughout the research process, which led to varying visual representations that were used to record the thoughts of the researcher during the interviewing process, as well as during the process of transcribing each interview. With the understandings that were already captured and structured, transitioning to Atlas.ti qualitative analysis software was not a natural progression for the researcher. The researcher continued the analysis process without the assistance of any qualitative analysis software to look at the data from the same scope and sequence that initially framed the analysis process.

Saldana's (2009) qualitative research manual was used to guide the coding process for the study. Saldana (2009) proposed coding methods that allowed the researcher to pursue the coding process in a way to not negate the research questions. Saldana (2009) suggests varying coding methods, six of which are aligned to grounded theory, but Saldana (2009) states that these methods can also "be used in other non-grounded theory studies" (p. 42). The researcher engaged in two cycles of coding for the interview transcripts. The first cycle of coding methods included initial codes and in vivo codes, while the second cycle included focused codes.

First cycle of coding. While processing through the first cycle of coding, the researcher followed the recommendation from Charmaz (2006, p. 49):

1. Remain open
2. Stay close to your data
3. Construct short codes
4. Preserve actions
5. Compare data with data
6. Move quickly through the data.

The researcher chose a coding method that considered all facets of the raw data, regardless of how minute. The purpose was to identify the most significant words, lines, phrases, segments, or even paragraphs while coding to find the data that aligned with the research questions. The researcher began the coding process with the understanding that the codes would lead to categories and those categories would lead to themes. As a result, the researcher began the coding process with the end in mind, which was “a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set” (Clark & Braun, 2006, p. 10). The researcher began by coding the data based on the inquiry, patterns and information that was repetitive and of interest to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During the first cycle of coding, the researcher analyzed the same interview protocol of each participant before conducting an analysis of the next interview protocols. Maintaining a connection with one protocol at a time provided a focus that allowed for the implementation of the recommendations of Charmaz (2006). Being that each interview protocol had its own focus, the researcher was able to move quickly through the data, create short codes, identify commonalities and differences while comparing data, and highlight repeated words and significant phrases that were reflected in the responses of the participants.

During the initial phase of coding the researcher was able to consider the words, lines, pieces and sections of each transcript to uncover meaning that related to the phenomenon of literacy JEPD (Charmaz, 2006). Sometimes, that meaning was best captured using in vivo codes, or the exact words of the participant (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009). The first cycle of coding was complete when the researcher was able to complete this phase of coding with each transcript within each protocol.

Second cycle of coding. The second cycle of coding used focused codes, which allowed the researcher to reorganize the codes created during the first cycle of coding. The researcher created focused codes by categorizing the codes created during the first cycle of coding. The focused codes attached meaning to larger sections of data (Charmaz, 2006).

The researcher aligned the focused codes which led to the formation of categories displayed using a hierarchy chart. This chart led to documenting the themes that were present throughout the coded data via thematic analysis. The researcher identified the codes that were examined within the literature review and the codes that were revealed in the data itself (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The researcher followed Marshall and Rossman's (2016) suggestion of maintaining analytic memos to record thoughts and questions that arose as the researcher reflected on the data and the process.

During this process it became evident that the stories of the participant was the most viable data to support the developing themes. The researcher began to outline the specific stories shared by the participants during the interviewing process to paint a picture of the experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2013).

The research questions and the patterns documented during the coding process of the interview data were used to create a categorical structure that was then sorted and recognized by the following themes:

- Theme One: Meeting Instructional Needs
- Theme Two: Building Teacher Capacity
- Theme Three: Meaningful Literacy JEPD

The literature from the literature review was reflected upon during this process. The researcher found it necessary to consider and align what the research found regarding the topic of the themes recognized in the data.

Confidentiality

Esterberg (2002) speaks firmly on the fact that confidentiality and informed consent are relevant to social research, and that it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants are informed of all aspects of the study and that the identity of the participants is protected. The researcher provided anonymity by using pseudonyms for participants, using electronic informed consent forms, as well as having conducted all interviews in a safe location agreed upon by both the researcher and the participant. The researcher kept all records including all identifiable data (audio recordings, transcripts, researcher's journal, field notes and memos) in a safe and secure location within the possession of the researcher.

The researcher maintained the anonymity of each participant and the research location in all research documents by de-identifying the data. All research documents will be destroyed five years after the conclusion of the research study.

Representation

It is noted throughout the literature that qualitative research is not necessarily a process that you can definitively define. It was no surprise to find that research also noted that there is no one, or certain way to represent the findings of qualitative research; Specifically, the lived experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006). Some of the literature notes creative analytical practices (CAP) as a more viable option than traditional when the research is centered around the lived experience (Parry & Johnson, 2006). Berbary (2012) identifies using CAP as a choice "to do representation differently" (p. 1). The researcher chose to represent the findings in a traditional

format. The structure of the research study was conducive to allowing the participants to describe their experiences as they lived them. The methodology, methods, and data analysis all worked together to capture rich descriptions of each participants' account.

Reflecting on the research questions, using in vivo codes, member checks and vignettes, or stories of the participants, to support the representation of the findings, are all varying components that the researcher employed to represent the voice of the participant throughout the research process. The researcher maintained a researcher's journal, memo logs and field notes. During this process the researcher engaged in reflexivity throughout this process to ensure that the experiences and thoughts of the researcher were not lost or infused with that of the participant. Maintaining separate spaces for the researcher's subjectivity and the participants experiences allowed for the two to exist with the understanding that the researcher's words, thoughts and experiences were not that of the participants (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

The researcher chose to structure the research as a qualitative case study, for the sole purpose of exploring literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy job-embedded professional development. The researcher also chose to trust the process and present the findings, the experiences of the participants using a traditional format.

Trustworthiness and Ethics

In consideration of the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher focused on implementing a checks and balance system to ensure that the outcome of the study was not biased by the perspective of the researcher, which was influenced by the researcher's worldview. Stringer (2014, p. 92) suggests promoting rigor in research by using the following developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985):

- Credibility—the plausibility and integrity of the study

- Transferability—the possibility of applying the outcomes of the study to other contexts
- Dependability—research procedures that are clearly defined and open to scrutiny
- Confirmability—evidence that the procedures described actually took place

According to Stringer (2014), credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are the elements that should be present in research to establish the trustworthiness of the study.

Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest that the elements that establish trustworthiness of a study should be considered at its conception. As a result, the researcher integrated member checks, triangulating data, audio recorder (Hall et al. 2016) and the transcription of the audio recordings as well as peer checks to increase the trustworthiness of the proposed research.

Member Checks. Using member checks as a method to establish trustworthiness of the findings of the research was one way to institute a system of checks and balances between the researcher and the participant (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Member checking was a validation strategy that was used to establish trustworthiness (Cresswell, 2007). Because the chosen methodology of the study was qualitative case study, the participants were called upon to validate the interpretations and themes derived from the data (Hall et al. 2016). This provided the participants the opportunity to share their ideas on the way the data was interpreted to ensure that the data represented the truth of their experiences and that none of which were lost in translation (Stringer, 2014; Hall et al. 2016).

Peer Checks. Also soliciting unbiased feedback from peers as it related to the research process was also a part of the strategy implemented to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. A concept described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as peer debriefing, was used during the research process to receive unbiased feedback as it related to the data collection process and

interpretation of findings to guarantee that analyses was grounded in data and that the bias and subjectivity of the researcher did not interfere in the research process (Cresswell, 2007).

The researcher had two peer debriefers. The first was a school psychologist who completed their doctoral studies. The researcher chose the first peer debriefer because there was no working knowledge of the case of literacy JEPD, but there was some experience with the process of completing research from their own studies. As a result, the researcher believed that this peer would be able to provide relevant feedback on the data collection process as well as an objective perspective on the interpretation of the data collected.

The second peer debriefer was a school counselor, who also taught elementary students in both math and literacy content areas for ten years prior to becoming an elementary school counselor, a role in which they had served in for nineteen years. This colleague was selected because they also completed their doctoral studies and had some working knowledge of the process of conducting research. Also, their experiences as a former teacher and as a current participant of JEPD that is relevant to their practice, they would be able to provide a different perspective, being that they were more aligned to the case of JEPD than the first peer debriefer.

Triangulation. It is common in qualitative research to only use in-depth qualitative interviews as the main data collection method to explore an inquiry. Qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal and field notes are the data sources that the researcher embraced during the research process. The researcher used triangulation to add to the trustworthiness that the findings of the research was an accurate account of the perspectives of the participants that provided the detail necessary to reflect the reality of each of the participants' experiences with JEPD. deMarrais (2004) also notes the interview process as being an integral component to increase the trustworthiness of the research study. Establishing a "rigorous design

process” that defined the problem and purpose of the research, as well as ensuring the readiness and ability of the researcher conducting the interviews added to the credibility of the research process (deMarrais, 2004, p. 67). The researcher increased the trustworthiness of the research study by developing an interview guide that included questions that were clear, concise, opened ended and structured in a way that allowed the participants to speak to their experiences in a narrative, as opposed to close ended questions (deMarrais, 2004).

Transferability. As a result of the research study being a qualitative case study, guided by a situated learning conceptual perspective, the findings are not generalizable, such as what may be observed in a quantitative study, but are transferable, which is more common in qualitative studies (Stringer, 2014). The study, as is common when focusing on the contextual aspects of professional development, was very specific by way of participants and location, therefore, what may be transferable about the potential findings of the research study, is left to be determined by other researchers through exploring the outcome of the study (Stringer, 2014; Merriam, 2009).

The purpose of the study was to provide a rich description of how elementary literacy teachers interpret the impact of literacy focused JEPD. Integrating triangulation and member checking (Marshall & Rossman, 2016), as well as peer checking as validity criteria are all considered to be tools that supported the trustworthiness of the decisions and outcomes of the study.

Ethics

According to Marshall and Rossman (2016), “Ethics require a focus on matters of relationships—with participants, with stakeholders, with peers, and with larger community of discourse” (p. 51). Because the study required a focus on people, it was imperative that the

safety of the potential participants was a noted component of the research process. Esterberg (2002, p. 44) outlines the following questions that social researchers should ponder when considering being ethically responsible during the research process:

- How should we conduct research so as not to hurt others?
- What kinds of relationships should we attempt to create with our research subjects?
- What kinds of power relations are there between those who are doing the research and those who are being researched?
- Who benefits from social research? Who should benefit?

These questions required the researcher to consider ethical matters as it related to the study. The first question proposed by Esterberg (2002, p. 44) asks the researcher to ponder “How should we conduct research so as not to hurt others?” Because the study involved human subjects, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) required that the researcher follow a process guided by IRB to ensure that no participant is harmed (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This process included the researchers passing Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules that prepared the researcher’s plan to work with human subjects. This process, guided by the IRB, ensured that the researcher was well advised on the ethical practices necessary to ensure that the researcher was ethically responsible (Marshall & Rossman, 2016).

Esterberg’s (2002) next question, “What kinds of relationships should we attempt to create with our research subjects?” (p. 44), allowed for the consideration of how important informed consents are to the process. Electronic informed consents were used to explain the research project thoroughly, to respond to potential questions that may arise, and to protect the anonymity of the participant. The informed consent ensured that each participant was not only

informed of the purpose of the research, but also knowledgeable of the role of the researcher and the expectation of the participants. The electronic consent also responded to why the study was being conducted and in what ways the data would be utilized (Stringer, 2014).

“What kinds of power relations are there between those who are doing the research and those who are being researched?” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 44) is another question of Esterberg’s (2002) that made the researcher consider the deep-rooted power dynamic that existed between the researcher and the participants within the study. Because the study was designed as a qualitative case study, the participants were asked to participate in interviews, which may have, from their perspective, placed them in a vulnerable position and the researcher in a position of authority. The research agrees with Feminist research scholars that “researchers need to address the power relationships that are embedded in research” (Esterberg, 2002, pp. 48). As a result, the researcher used the invitation email, telephone script and the electronic informed consent to communicate the purpose of the study and the role of the researcher and the participants. This also included informing the participants of their right to not agree to participate, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time during the study. It was the belief of the researcher that informing participants on the front-end of the research study empowered each participant to make a sound decision with the understanding that their involvement with the study was their choice, which they had the right to change at any time during the study.

During the interviewing process, the researcher observed how it was natural for the participant and the researcher to sit across from one another, which could have been interpreted as a divide or a difference. After the initial interview, the researcher was intentional about the positioning of the researcher and the participant to attempt to level the potential idea of the presence of a hierarchy. As the interviews progressed, the researcher noticed that the difference

between the initial interview and the remaining interviews was that the participants proceeded to respond to the questions asked by the researcher, but they also began to ask clarifying questions and elaborated more on their responses without the type of prompting that the researcher had to engage in during the first interview. For the researcher, this represented the participants acknowledging their power or right to give as much of themselves as they wanted to give in those moments and say as much as they wanted to say without needing permission.

The researcher acknowledged early in the process the need to ensure that the data analysis process was not combined with the researcher's ideas of what the truth of the experiences expressed were. The researcher had a duty to engage with the data for the purpose of delivering the truth of the participants, from their perspective and nothing more. The researcher continuing reflective work with reflexivity practices assisted in managing the researcher's perspective.

The researcher provided a platform for the voice of the participants to represent their truth of their experiences with literacy JEPD. The researcher used words, phrase, lines, and paragraphs to represent and support the findings. The researcher's role was to find a way to acknowledge the experiences of the participants without altering their experiences to fit the researcher's ideas.

Although the relationship between the researcher and participants of this study does have an underlying power dynamic with the researcher being the initiator and the one in the relationship with the knowledge of the process, which puts the researcher in a position of power. The entire research process was designed to benefit the truth as it was experienced by the participants, which left no room for a biased data collection process, interpretation or representation of the findings.

The last statement addresses Esterberg's (2002) final questions, "Who benefits from social research? Who should benefit?" (p. 44). Society will potentially benefit from the proposed research because educational research can only inform policies and practices that directly impact teacher quality and student outcomes.

Subjectivity Statement

The researcher was a teacher with 15 years of experience within the metropolitan area at the time of the study. The researcher currently works as a Professional Learning Communities Coach. The researcher has been a participant and facilitator of JEPD on both school and district levels. Having had some of the same experiences as the participants of this study, it is acknowledged that the researcher has a preexisting perception of JEPD. Because the researcher shares experiences dealing with the same phenomenon, the literature suggests that researchers reflect upon their own experiences throughout the research process in writing to not blend personal perspectives with the perspective of the participants being interviewed (Hesse-Biber, 2017; Marshall and Rossman, 2016). The constructionist epistemological stance in which this study is positioned comes with the understanding that bias and subjectivity exists, but by acknowledging this prior to interviewing participants allowed there to be some control over the subjectivity of the researcher. The researcher used reflexivity as a methodological practice during varying stages of the research process. Prior to beginning the research process, the researcher began practicing reflexivity by journaling about personal and professional experiences with JEPD and feelings about engaging in JEPD (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Reflecting on past and present experiences with JEPD provided opportunities for the researcher to acknowledge the researcher's own perceptions prior to interviewing the participants. During data collection and the analysis phase of the research process, researcher continued to employ reflexivity strategies

in writing by way of field notes, memos and journaling as a means to ensure that the researcher's thoughts were not influencing the ideas of the participants or the interpretation of the experiences of the participants during the data collection and analysis process (Hesse-Biber, 2017).

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to explore elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy job-embedded professional development. The following research questions were addressed:

Research Question 1 (RQ1) What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

Research Question 2 (RQ2) What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of the benefits of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

Research Question 3 (RQ3) How does literacy job-embedded professional development, in which teachers have been participants, impact teachers?

Research Question 4 (RQ4) What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective?

Literacy teachers were interviewed to capture their perceptions of the impact of literacy focused JEPD. As a result of the participants sharing their experiences with literacy JEPD, the findings of the research conducted can add more context to how teachers perceive JEPD. Specifically, literacy JEPD.

This chapter is dedicated to representing the findings and results of the data analysis. To complete this task, this chapter is structured so that the research questions are reflected upon throughout.

Description of Sample

The commonalities that existed amongst the three participants was necessary to meet the purposeful sampling criteria established by the researcher. It is also important to note the diversity that existed within the group as well (See Table 3).

Participant One

Participant One was a black male in his 40s. Participant One had 15 or more years of teaching experience within one school district located in Southwest Tennessee. Participant One completed a teacher education program in Southwest Tennessee.

Participant Two

Participant Two was a black female in her 30s. Participant two had ten years of teaching experience where she taught either Math and Science or English Language Arts during those ten years. Participant Two dedicated the last three years of teaching to teaching Literacy. Participant Two completed a teacher education program in Southeast Tennessee.

Participant Three

Participant Three was a black female in her thirties. She had eight years of teaching experience and one year as a district-level literacy instructional leader. All of her years of experience were dedicated to literacy, but in three separate school districts in the metropolitan area of this Southern state. Currently, Participant Three is a literacy teacher in Southwest Tennessee. Participant Three completed a teacher education program in the metropolitan area.

Participant Commonalities

Both Participant One and Participant Two held leadership or district level positions within education. Participant One and Participant Two have taught in the classroom for their entire careers, where Participant Three worked on district-level for one year of her career in

education. Also, all the participants have presented professional development on school-level. Participant One and Participant Three have presented professional development on district-level as well.

Each of these demographical differences added to the value that existed within the shared experiences of each participant as their perceptions of the impact of literacy focused job-embedded professional development was explored.

Table 3

Participants’ Experience and Content Areas Taught

Pseudonym	Years of Experience	Content Area Taught
Participant One	15	ELA and Social Studies
Participant Two	10	ELA and Social Studies
Participant Three	8	ELA, SS, Science, Math

Note. Years of experience reflects combined years of teaching prior to Fall 2019. Content Area Abbreviations: ELA=English Language Arts, SS=Social Studies.

Findings

Using a qualitative case study research design, literacy teachers’ perceptions on the impact of literacy focused JEPD was explored. This chapter is organized according to the three themes developed as a result of the data analysis conducted by the researcher. The researcher supports the trustworthiness of the research by using the voice of the participants’ as support for the themes.

Theme One: Meeting Instructional Needs

According to Birman et al. (2000), Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), Desimone (2009) and Desimone (2011), in order to meet the instructional needs of teachers, professional development has to be structured with consideration given to the five core features of effective professional development: content focus, active learning, coherence, duration and collective participation. These attributes are also evident in JEPD.

Meeting instructional needs was a major theme that was derived from the data. The participants of the study all identified necessary components that needed to be embedded in literacy focused JEPD for it to meet their instructional needs. Many of which aligned with what Desimone (2011) and Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) considers to be the core features of effective professional development, which also aligns to the qualities that can be found in JEPD.

The participants described the literacy focused JEPDs that they found to be effective and met their instructional needs as focused, precise, collaborative environments in which the participants were active participants in the learning process. Participant One, a fourth-grade elementary literacy teacher, shared support for the components identified by Desimone (2011) and Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) when asked about what components were necessary for him to find literacy JEPD effective as well as the components present in literacy JEPD that were the most memorable. Participant One placed emphasis on content focus and active learning, both are core components of effective professional development. Desimone (2011) explains content focus as professional development activities that are centered around a specific subject with consideration given to how students learn the content. While acknowledging active learning promotes teacher involvement during professional development that allow the participant to be

active participants in the process (Desimone, 2011). Participant One identified the presence of content focus when he stated that “professional development now is really and truly driven to what we are teaching in the classroom” (Interview Two). Participant One shared this experience about attending a literacy JEPD that was content focused and integrated active learning as well:

When the second semester started there was a PD session held for 4th and 5th grade teachers out at [Name] high school]. That particular PD session was geared toward the third module of our [literacy] curriculum. For 4th grade it was leading us into the unit of the Revolutionary War. So, that particular PD session really and truly focused on what our first unit of that module should look like. It enabled us to see the text that would be used, we read the text, even though most of us in the room had already read the text because we knew that it was coming up, but in that PD session we read the text that we were going to read with our students. We looked at all of the protocols. We looked at all of the different graphic organizers that maybe used. We looked at, and we participated in a gallery walk because each module has opened with a gallery walk. Not only each module, but each unit. The very first unit of each module has the students participating in a gallery walk to see if they can figure out what the module would be about. (Interview Two)

Additionally, to further support his perspective on the need for content focus and active learning during literacy JEPD, Participant One added:

So, these PD sessions are designed, I believe, to show the participants what things should look like when you get back to your own classroom. It allows us to participate in it ourselves so that we can better describe it and deliver it to the students, because if I don't know what I'm talking about, it's going to be hard for me to explain it to my students.

So, once I get an understanding of it, then I can help the children understand. Because if they start asking me questions, and I've never done it myself, I'm going to be lost and they are going to know it. (Interview Two)

Participant One shared that attending literacy focused JEPD was relative to improving his instructional practice because it was precise and focused on the content as well as included activities that focused on "how students learn that content" (Desimone, 2011, p. 29). Participant One further expressed an indication of being supported with literacy focused JEPD when he stated, "it is specifically designed for me" (Interview Two). This was an indication that he attended literacy JEPD that he knew he would meet his instructional needs because it was precise in that it was focused on the content and designed to prepare him to meet the needs of the students by allowing opportunities to actively participate in the process of learning how to deliver content to his students.

Participant One further supported how his contemporary experiences met his needs with this thought:

I guess I would say that it helps me, and it makes me better in the classroom. The PD that I attend is directly what I am going to teach in the classroom. (Interview Two)

Participant Two, a fourth-grade literacy teacher, experiences differed from the other two participants in the study. Participant two had ten years of teaching experience. The first seven years of her teaching career were dedicated to math and science. She revealed in interview one that she taught literacy for the last three years of her teaching career, "I didn't start teaching reading until three years ago" (Interview One). Although Participant two has been a teacher for ten years, she was a relatively new literacy teacher, which gave her a different view of literacy

focused JEPD, in comparison to the other two participants who began their careers as literacy teachers. Participant Two shared how she became a literacy teacher:

We lost a teacher. We had to merge classes, so I had about thirty students and the other teacher had about thirty students. So, we taught our own reading. So, from there, that's when I started getting more engaged in and understanding parts of teaching reading.

(Interview One)

Like Participant One, Participant Two supported the idea that attending effective literacy JEPD that met her needs was impactful because it was designed to meet her instructional needs. Participant Two spoke on her need for differentiated content focused JEPD. It was clear in Participant Two's interviews that she benefited from receiving precise literacy JEPD that included participants that had the same instructional needs. Participant Two's need for effective literacy JEPD coincides with Desimone's (2011) core features of effective professional development, which includes collective participation, "Groups of teachers from the same grade, subject or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community" (p.29). Participant Two also identified the need for differentiated JEPD to meet her individualized needs as a component of effective literacy JEPD. Research supports the perspective of Participant Two about the effectiveness of differentiated PD. Reigeluth (2012) and Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2012) emphasize that the traditional approach to professional development does not consider the individual needs of teachers as well as not being as supportive as job-embedded professional development models that are more differentiated for the learner. Participant Three shared the sentiments reflected in the literature pertaining to the need to differentiate literacy JEPD to meet her instructional needs:

Not all schools are going to need the same thing. Not all teachers are going to need the

same thing and professional development cannot be one size fits all. (Interview Three)

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2012) also indicate that traditional models are also not content specific. Participant Two shared her need for differentiated content focused professional development:

I work in a K-8 school, so my needs versus somebody in middle school, our needs are very different. Even though I'm departmentalized, if I'm sitting in there with somebody who is the eighth-grade teacher who teaches literacy, her needs are still going to be very different from mine. But they kind of break us off now. I may be with K-5 literacy teachers versus being with the 6th-8th, or versus all of us K-8th sitting in that one room.

So, prefer the smaller groups. I can ask questions and I feel more comfortable. (Interview Two)

It was reflective in the interviews of Participant One and Participant Two that content focused JEPD that was precise in its design was what was needed for it to be effective for both participants in order to meet their instructional needs.

Participant Three, first grade literacy teacher with one-year experience as a district-level instructional leader of literacy expressed the need for literacy JEPD to be engaging for it to be effective. Participant Three prioritized engaging JEPD as the core component to what she needed for literacy focused JEPD to be effective. Participant Three defined engagement to include the facilitator of the professional development as well as the activities embedded within the professional development designed. Participant Three shared, "I like to be engaged" (Interview Two). She described choosing facilitators of literacy JEPD that she knew were "engaging and fun" (Interview Two). When asked about components that were needed for

literacy JEPD to be effective and meet her instructional needs, Participant Three shared the following:

Engaging. The facilitator needs to be knowledgeable and able to answer the questions.

Not just on a generalized scale, but intimately. Be able to tell me information. Preferably someone who has experienced it. (Interview Two)

Participant Three placed emphasis on engagement strategies as a key component needed for JEPD to meet her instructional needs. Like Participant Three, Participant One identified having an engaging presenter as being a necessity for literacy JEPD to be effective to meet his instructional needs. Participant One shared that he was looking for a presenter that could “keep his attention” (Interview Three). Participant Two identified the need to have a presenter that is knowledgeable (Interview 3). As reflected in the data, the needs of each participant varied, but the commonality of the need of an effective facilitator to meet the instructional need of each participant was constant. Croft et al. (2010) refers to the facilitator’s role as being responsible for “strengthening the connection of teacher learning to student learning” (p. 15). The idea of high-quality literacy JEPD is unlikely if the facilitator lacks the knowledge, interpersonal skills, and expertise in the area of literacy that allows for the formation of a collaborative learning environment (Croft et al., 2010).

Participant Two included being engaged as a component of effective focused JEPD. She described what being engaged looked like for her:

So, I wouldn’t be on my phone texting. I would be taking notes. I would be asking questions. I would be asking definitely clarifying questions. I would be asking where can I find more of this? (Interview Two)

Participant Three also identified movement as a strategy that was necessary to maintain her attention during professional development. She stated, “There has to be some type of movement. Like, just sitting in a seat for 45 minutes to an hour is not what I want to do, or what’s the best use of my time” (Interview Two).

Although the participants defined engagement differently based on their individual experiences, the commonality that existed was the need for engagement strategies as a component of literacy JEPD to meet the instructional needs of the participants.

Each participant shared that they needed specific components to be present in literacy focused JEPD for it to be effective for them in order to meet their instructional needs. Their identified need for differentiated literacy JEPD, content focus, active learning and collective participation all aligned with what research identified as core components of effective professional development (Desimone, 2011; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

Table 4

Connection Between Core Features of Effective Professional Development and Participants’ Perceptions of Effective Literacy JEPD

<p>Content Focus: Professional development activities should focus on subject matter content and how students learn that content.</p>	<p>*precise JEPD (Participant 1, Interview 2) *cannot be one size fits all (Participant 3, Interview 3)</p>
<p>Active learning: Teachers should have opportunities to get involved, such as observing and receiving feedback analyzing student work, or making presentations, as opposed to passively sitting through lectures.</p>	<p>*role-play (Participant 1, Interview 2) *participation (Participant 1, Interview 2) *interactive (Participant 2, Interview2)</p>

Table 4 Continued

<p>Coherence: What teachers learn in any professional development activity should be consistent with other professional development, with their knowledge and beliefs, and with school, districts, and state reforms and policies.</p>	<p>*research-based (Participant 3, Interview 2)</p>
<p>Duration: Professional developments should be spread over a semester and should include 20 hours or more of contact time.</p>	<p>*weekly *weekly *monthly (Participant 1, Interview 2) *monthly (Participant 3, Interview 2) *continuous (Participant 2, Interview 2)</p>
<p>Collective participation: Groups of teachers from the same grade, subject or school should participate in professional development activities together to build an interactive learning community.</p>	<p>*collaboration (Participant 1, Interview 2 & 3) *groups, teams (Participant 1, Interview 2)</p>

Theme Two: Building Teacher Capacity

Professional development is “one of the most critical targets of education reform” (Desimone, 2009, p. 181). In more recent years, the United States government revisited education reform with the amendment of the ESEA of 1965 by Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015. By amending the ESEA of 1965 with Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, the government assumes responsibility of failing to fully support teachers in the area of professional learning to assist in preparing students for college and career readiness (CCR) (“Teachers Matter,” 2012). Specific to teacher development Part A, Title II of this act clearly outlines the necessity of support for teachers by way of professional development opportunities in order to improve student learning outcomes. As previously discussed, the first major theme found throughout the data was meeting the instructional needs of the teacher. According to the literature, if the instructional needs of teachers are met, student outcomes are subject to increase as well (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hirsh, 2009). The connection between

building teacher capacity by meeting their instructional needs and increasing student achievement was made in education reform, in the literature and was found to be the second major theme during the data analysis process. It was found that the participants agreed that the literacy JEPD that met their instructional needs had an impact on their instructional practices, as well as their student outcomes.

The commonality found in the interviews of all the participants was that literacy JEPD impacted the instructional practices of the participants, as well as the outcomes of their students. According to “Teachers Matters” (2018), teachers, in comparison to all other school-related factors, have the largest impact on student achievement. In addition, Ingvarson et al. (2005) state that professional development is viewed as a key component in enhancing “teaching and learning in our schools” (p. 2). As a result, improving the instructional practices of teachers is relative to building teacher capacity, which impacts student achievement (“Teachers Matters” 2018). The literature has identified a connection between professional development, which builds teacher capacity, and improves student learning outcomes (Borko; 2009; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Desimone, 2009).

The intent that drives JEPD is to provide continuous learning opportunities for teacher that are actively engaging for the purpose of building the capacity of teachers to increase student outcomes (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Hirsh, 2009). As the participants reflected on their experiences with literacy JEPD during the interviewing process, it was observed that the participants connected to the idea that engaging in literacy JEPD did increase their instructional ability and their students were able to benefit from their learning. Participant One recalled an instance where his active participation with a literacy JEPD which provided opportunities of

engagement with a practice he called “the gradual release” not only impacted his ability to teach, but also improved his students’ opportunities to learn:

I think the gradual release has allowed me to see that with constant practice, or with repeated practice, the students get to see me model a particular thing, and then we all work through it together, and then they may work through it by themselves. As I walk around and see their level of understanding, and when they are working together, I can sense who got it and who didn’t. I can kind of make some re-directives at that time, and that’s before they get to doing something by themselves. So, it (gradual release) allows you to help them get a better understanding before you release them to do it on their own.

(Interview 3)

Participant One continued to speak about using what he had learned to increase his students’ level of understanding, but also his expectations of attending literacy JEPD. Participant One linked his participation in literacy JEPD with the expectation of improving his instructional practices for the purpose of helping his students succeed. He concluded, “My expected outcome would be to help me deliver the lesson in a manner that will move children from point A to point B. Or even further.” (Interview 3)

Participant Two also identified a connection between improving her instructional practice and increasing her student outcomes. She expressed that being an active participant in literacy JEPD improved her instructional skills and allowed her to better facilitate learning and meet the needs of her students in the classroom. She was very specific about her need for literacy JEPD to improve her instructional strategies so that could be prepared to serve her students. Participant Two discussed how she was better able to meet the needs of her students because her instructional practices have been enhanced as a result of participating in literacy JEPD:

I've grown as a teacher. Especially with literacy. I thought that literacy was something that was really hard to teach. I thought it was impossible to teach reading, but it's really not. It's just taking something that's big and just breaking it down into smaller ideas. So, by them giving me information that's pinpointed towards what I need, I am able to meet my students because I feel more prepared. I don't feel overwhelmed. (Interview 2)

Participant Two's ability to link her increased instructional abilities to the needs of her students emphasized her understanding that increasing her capacity as a teacher correlated to improved student outcomes.

Participant Three shared the same perspective as Participant One and Two, as she also identified literacy as an avenue to improve her instructional practices and impact the success of her students. Participant Three looked at literacy JEPD as "a way to gauge if I am doing what I need to meet my students' needs" (Interview Three). As Participant Three reflected on what she and her students have gained as a result of her participation in literacy JEPD, she shared the following:

We did some focus training around foundational skills that I found very useful to use this past school year. I did use every day during the foundational skills block with the whole group and then the workstations. So, my foundational skills block looked different this school year than it did five years ago when I taught first grade, and that was because of job-embedded PD around foundational skills and what was required for this particular school district. (Interview Three)

Participant Three identified how literacy JEPD impacted her instructional practices to the point where it changed the way she taught foundational skills. She credited literacy JEPD for building her capacity in the area of foundational literacy. Participant Three concluded that literacy JEPD

impacted her literacy block in a way that “allows them (students) to grow as learners” (Interview Three). Again, aligning to the literature that defines JEPD as a strategy that is used to build teacher capacity for the purpose of improving the outcomes of their students (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995 & Hirsh, 2009).

Participant Three also explained how literacy JEPD made her more intentional about how she delivered her instruction and more aware of the expectations that she had of her students as well:

I think I’ve changed the way I’ve approached teaching foundational skills. Not just taking a teacher manual and delivering information straight forward, but just looking at a whole as all the students that encompass my classroom and making sure that I’m able to meet their needs. Then making sure I am very conscious of how I am delivering that information to the students in the correct way. (Interview 2)

Education reform movements, such as ESEA of 1965 and NCLB of 2001 have placed higher expectations on student achievement, which in turn has placed emphasis on improving teacher practices (Borko, 2009). Literacy JEPD is an opportunity to build teacher capacity and as a result, can affect the learning outcomes of students (Ingvarson et al., 2005). The participants collectively experienced literacy JEPD that they benefitted from and impacted their practices as well as improved the learning process for their students in the classroom.

Theme Three: Meaningful Literacy Job-Embedded Professional Development

ESEA section 8101(42) explains that professional development activities are continuous, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data driven and classroom-focused. Other research adds that job-embedded professional development encompasses professional learning that is situated on school-level and inside of classrooms (Croft et al., 2010). The attributes of effective

professional development identified in the literature all mention job-embedded activities that are connected to the classroom. According to the teachers in this study, this type of contextualized learning situated on school-level and in the classroom is what made the literacy JEPD that they described as effective, meaningful to them as teachers. The participants of the study defined meaningful literacy JEPD as those experiences that impacted their instructional practices in the classroom. These experiences provided the participants with convenient and accessible information, strategies, materials and resources that they used with their students in their classrooms. It was those experiences with literacy JEPD that the participants described as meaningful. Meaningful JEPD is the third major theme revealed throughout the interviews of the participants.

Participant One and Participant Two indicated that meaningful literacy JEPD was relative to the position of the job-embedded professional development. They expressed the importance of the location of literacy JEPD in the interviews. The participants perceived literacy JEPD positioned on school level and in classrooms as being more meaningful than literacy JEPD that was in spaces on district level or outside of the classroom setting. The position of literacy JEPD mattered to Participant One and Participant Two of this study and matters in the research as it indicates that JEPD encompasses opportunities for teachers to learn daily in their natural environments (Hirsh, 2009).

The impact expressed by Participant One and Participant Two was two-fold. First, literacy JEPD positioned in the classrooms of teachers provided opportunities for the participants to collaborate in contextualized learning, which the participants acknowledged as being beneficial.

Participant One reflected on being able to make a classroom connection with JEPD in which he had been a participant:

I've been in spaces where we've been in actual classrooms. We may have PD sessions across the district that are delivered in a school and so we are actually in classrooms and that kind of helps because you get to see how it's delivered within a four- wall kind of setting versus a huge Auditorium. Being in a classroom and watching how it is delivered can allow you to see, okay well maybe if my desk is, if they are set up in a particular way, it won't be conducive for what that particular protocol calls for. I've also been in PD sessions that has been held in what is called our Teacher Learning Academy. Now in that building there are classrooms but there is also a very large auditorium in that building and we have had some PD sessions in that building. In that building you can hold a rather large number of teachers in it I would even venture to say upwards of about 300 to 400 at a time. I have been to PD sessions in that room and I have learned in that room, but I have to admit that sessions in that room probably were not as effective as sessions in a classroom because you get to see it in a room that looks similar to yours. (Interview Two)

Participant One shared a story that revealed that the location of literacy JEPD mattered to him. He provided two distinct examples of one professional development held in an auditorium on district-level and a separate professional development held on school-level inside of an actual classroom. When compared, Participant One identified the school-level literacy professional development as the most effective of the two. He attributed this effectiveness to the location of the literacy professional development. Where matters. For Participant One, meaningful literacy JEPD had be positioned in a classroom setting.

Participant Two described the position of the literacy JEPD in which she has been a participant:

Now, when we do breakout sessions we may start in the library, which is the common area, but it may be a session that's held in the library, but the other teachers may go like to my classroom or you have other classrooms for us to go into. Which is also a great way too because you can see other things the other teachers are doing. I know there have been countless times that I have taken pictures of just like rules or how I can see somebody's word wall or I can see how they show their standards...So you may go into somebody else's room and they may give you an idea. But yeah, I like that. (Interview Two)

Participant Two reflected on the benefits of JEPD being situated in the classroom of a teacher. She described how being in a familiar environment caused her to consider how to improve her practices, routines and procedures. Like Participant One, Participant Two found literacy JEPD positioned in a classroom setting as meaningful to her and her classroom.

Although Participant Three did mention that the literacy JEPD in which she was a participant took place in a classroom setting on district-level and at her "home-school", she did not attach any meaning to the situatedness of literacy JEPD. Unlike Participant One and Participant Two, Participant Three did not attach value to where literacy JEPD took place. It was not communicated in the interviews whether the position of literacy JEPD had an impact or was of any benefit to her or not.

Participant One and Participant Two spoke on how being in a familiar environment enabled them to think about their classroom environments and, in the case of Participant One, how to improve his instructional practices in the classroom by implementing the strategies that

he learned while participating in the JEPD. In the case of Participant Two, how to improve her classroom environment, routines and procedures as a result of what she was exposed to while being engaged in professional learning in the classroom environment in which the literacy JEPD was held. Participant Three did not express a benefit as it related to the location of literacy JEPD.

The second impact related to the participants engaging in meaningful literacy JEPD was the need to be able to implement what they learned from the literacy JEPD into their classrooms. The participants considered literacy JEPD meaningful when the learning that took place was accessible, convenient and transferrable to the classroom. The participants were matter of fact about being able to implement strategies and use resources from JEPD immediately in their classrooms. “The research indicates that providing educators with readily accessible learning opportunities has substantive and favorable impact” (Shaha & Ellsworth, 2013).

According to Participant One and Participant Two, being active participants in the learning process increased the implementation rate of the strategies that the teachers were able to practice as participants of literacy JEPD. According to the participants in this study, for professional development to work, the learning that has taken place has to show up in the classrooms. According to the literature, the components aligned to JEPD increases the rate of implementation within the classroom (Desimone et al., 2002; Penuel, 2007). Because the teachers in this study attended literacy JEPD, which encompassed the core features of effective professional development, the teachers were more likely to implement what they learned (Desimone et al., 2002; Penuel, 2007). The participants of the study shared accounts of what it meant to participate in meaningful literacy professional development that connected to the classroom.

When asked about his expectations when attending a literacy JEPD, Participant One shared this response, “My expectation is that I’m going to walk into a session and I’m going to receive something that I can implement right away” (Interview 3). Participant One went on to express “gaining new and effective strategies that can be utilized in the classroom,” as a benefit of participating in literacy JEPD. Participant One’s perceptions also identified participating in literacy JEPD as “an opportunity to gain knowledge” and “obtain something that will truly benefit me in my classroom” (Interview Three).

Participant Two had similar expectations of literacy JEPD as Participant One that had a direct connection to the classroom. Participant Two expectation of literacy JEPD was to “just give me those strategies that I can use immediately in my classroom” (Interview Three). It was important to Participant Two that the literacy JEPD that she attended provided her with immediate resources: was that I stated that literacy JEPD “makes everything easier so I’m able to get clear concise things I can use in my classroom” (Interview Three). Participant Two attributed her life as a classroom teacher as being easier after engaging in literacy JEPD.

Participant Two described the ways in which self-defined effective literacy JEPD was meaningful:

It was something that I could use. It was something that was useful. It was something that related to what I was teaching or what I would be teaching. So, it was just meaningful information. It was just meaningful to what was going on in my classroom at that particular time. (Interview Three)

So, it’s always something that is meaningful. It’s always something that I can use immediately in my classroom and I don’t have to do any prepping with it. Like, I don’t

have to dissect it or find more information. I can go ahead and just implement it that next day. (Interview Three)

You're going to always have to think about your students themselves as the teacher, but it's still information that I can go back and use quickly versus having to sit down and make the form or make the handout. They've already given me the handout in the session, I just have to copy it, or if I want to, manipulate it to how I want it to be.

(Interview Three)

Participant Two spoke on her ability to transfer what was gained from the literacy JEPD in which she was a participant to her classroom. She also included instances that reflected how literacy JEPD simplified the teacher actions in her classroom and enhanced her instructional practices. Participant Two's perceptions of literacy JEPD connected the benefits of self-defined effective professional development to be related the participant's ability to implement what was gained into the classroom.

Like Participant One and Participant Two, Participant Three described effective literacy JEPD as meaningful, engaging, content specific professional development that required active participation, which allowed her to leave with strategies that were transferrable to the classroom. Participant Three explained, "I take what knowledge I have received during that time and take it back to the classroom and apply it ...where it meets the needs for my classroom, my students..." as an example of what she would do after participating in a literacy JEPD that she found meaningful. (Interview Three)

Meaningful literacy JEPD was described by the participants of this study as professional developments that equipped the participants with something that they did not have that would enhance their instructional practices in the classroom. Participant One and Participant Two both

found the position of literacy JEPD in classroom as being more meaningful to them and their classroom practices as teachers. All participants found literacy JEPD that provided information, strategies, resources and/or materials that could be immediately implemented inside of their classrooms as meaningful. Although Participant three did not indicate the location of literacy JEPD as being meaningful, all participants agreed that meaningful literacy JEPD in which they were participants had components that connected the learning that took place in the JEPD to the learning that took place inside of the classrooms of the participants. This is important to student's success. The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) revealed that when teachers see student success after implementing strategies gained from JEPD, this impacts their willingness to improve their instructional practices ("Beyond Job-Embedded", 2012).

Conclusion

The current study explored literacy teachers' perceptions of the impact of literacy job-embedded professional development. Data collection methods included semi-structured interview using a three series interview protocol as the primary method, researcher's journal, memos and field notes. Throughout the course of data analysis, the researcher was able to identify three constant themes reflected in the data: meeting instructional needs, building teacher capacity and meaningful literacy JEPD. The first theme, meeting instructional needs, discussed literacy teachers' perceptions on attributes that they associated with effective literacy JEPD. The second theme, building teacher capacity, discussed the benefits literacy JEPD had on enhancing the instructional practices of teachers as well as improving student outcomes. The third theme, meaningful literacy JEPD, discussed literacy teachers' perceptions on the connection literacy JEPD had to the reality of the classroom. This chapter described the themes and supported each using evidence situated in the interviews and aligned this data with the themes embedded within

the literature reviewed. Analysis of the data concluded that the literacy teachers that participated in this study perceived the literacy JEPD in which they were participants to have had benefits that impacted their instructional practices. The participants also perceived the literacy JEPD in which they were participants to have attributes that they defined as effective.

Finally, it is important to note that the three themes that were revealed during the research process aligned to the four research questions that guided the study as follows: study explored the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants? (Theme 3: Meaningful Literacy JEPD)
- RQ2. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of the benefits of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants? (Theme 2: Building Teacher Capacity)
- RQ3. How does literacy job-embedded professional development, in which elementary literacy teachers have been participants, impact literacy teachers? (Theme 2: Building Teacher Capacity)
- RQ4. What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective? (Theme 1: Meeting Instructional Needs)

The researcher will discuss the connection between the research questions and the themes in chapter five.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to synthesize and discuss the findings of this study as it relates to the study's research questions, literature review and conceptual framework. The researcher will reflect on the findings of the study and will provide implications and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

Summary of Findings Addressing Each Question

This study was a qualitative case study of literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD in which they were participants. This study created a platform that allowed for the exploration of three literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy JEPD. The data captured using a three-series interview protocol, was based on the individual experiences of the participants at varying points of their careers as literacy teachers. The current study offered an understanding of what the impact of literacy JEPD looked like for literacy teachers from the lens of the participant.

The researcher was able to explore each participants' experience and perceptions of literacy JEPD to determine its impact using the following methods: semi-structured interviews, researcher's journal, memos, and field notes. As a result, three major themes were captured: (a) meeting instructional needs; (b) building teacher capacity; (c) meaningful literacy JEPD.

Research Question 1: What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants? (Theme 3: Meaningful Literacy JEPD)

The primary goal of this study was to gather data that would allow the researcher to explore the experiences of elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD. To accomplish this, the researcher engaged the participants in a three-interview series protocol, which allowed the researcher to capture the participants past and contemporary experiences with literacy JEPD (Seidman, 2013). This study found a contrast between the participants' earlier and latter experiences with literacy JEPD. Two of the participants revealed that their earlier experiences with JEPD in general were helpful because they were novice teachers. As the participants became acquainted with their instructional roles and responsibilities, they formulated their own expectations for JEPD. The expectations developed were what the participants needed for their experiences with JEPD to be meaningful to their instructional practices. It was these self-defined expectations that influenced the perceptions of the participants' past and contemporary experiences with literacy JEPD. This development of expectations of literacy JEPD are what connected this research question to theme 3: meaningful literacy JEPD. The participants associated theme three: meaningful JEPD with their perceptions of literacy JEPD in which they had been participants that fulfilled their needs during that time of their teaching career.

Earlier Literacy Job-Embedded Professional Development Experiences

Because beginning teachers face several challenges, support provided in the realm of JEPD can assist, but not necessarily, with teacher-identity development, improved instructional practices, increased student outcomes and teacher retention (Avalos, 2011). As new teachers,

Participant One and Participant Three invited their earlier experiences with JEPD because they found them to be supportive. These participants were fond of all their earlier experiences with JEPD and attributed this to their inexperience in the field of education as well as their need for support as new teachers. The literature suggests that novice teachers face challenges as new teachers, which could assist in explaining not only the need, but also the approval that the participants had of JEPD early in their careers (Avalos, 2011).

The earlier experiences of Participant Two with literacy JEPD were not as favorable as the other participants. Participant Two had a difficult time recalling literacy JEPD in which she classified as memorable, and the literacy JEPD that she could easily describe where considered, by the participant, to have been overwhelming with information. Participant Two perceived her earlier experiences with literacy JEPD as counterproductive. Even after taking the time to attend the literacy JEPD, she continued to need instructional support, support that she had to provide to herself by researching strategies that she did not receive from the earlier literacy JEPD in which she was a participant. The earlier literacy JEPD were not meaningful for the participant. Participant Two attributed much of this to the traditional model structure that the earlier literacy JEPD in which she was a participant employed. The same traditional model that the literature describes as a workshop approach to professional development that is not associated with building teacher capacity because it lacks the components necessary to be considered effective (Penuel, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). For Participant Two, those missing components were collaborative practice, and strategies that she could use to transform her practice.

The participants all had earlier experiences with literacy JEPD that either supported them as new teachers or left them needing more, even after attending literacy JEPD. All the

participants experienced a shift in their perceptions of their contemporary experiences with literacy JEPD.

Contemporary Literacy Job-Embedded Professional Development Experiences

The participants constructed a different meaning of their latter experiences with literacy JEPD in comparison to that of their earlier experiences. Because the participants were experienced teachers during their contemporary experiences with literacy JEPD, they established expectations for the literacy JEPD in which they were participants that connected directly to their classroom environments. The participants were not in favor of literacy JEPD that was generalizable and disconnected from the classroom. When the participants engaged in literacy JEPD that aligned to their classrooms, the participants found the literacy JEPD to be meaningful. It is important to note that the participants did not deem all literacy JEPD to be meaningful during this time. The participants aligned meaningful literacy JEPD to that which was relevant to their practice and transferrable to the classroom. The participants of this study attributed meaningful literacy JEPD to that which they found to be realistic to their daily experiences as classrooms teachers. This perspective aligned to the situated theoretical lens that was used to frame this study.

Situated learning theory was used to frame this study because of the positionality of job-embedded professional development. The participants of this study defined meaningful JEPD as those which were directly related to their classroom environments. To include, but not limited to, literacy JEPD located in the classroom setting and literacy JEPD that provided strategies and resources that were transferable to their classrooms and/or directly linked to the classroom setting. The authentic and contextualized nature of JEPD, as described in situated learning theory, allowed teachers to have real-life experiences that are applicable to their classroom

environments that the participants described as meaningful experiences (Green et al., 2018).

What the participants describe as meaningful, the literature attributes to what makes the participants implement what they learn as a result of engaging in JEPD (Schell & Black, 1997; Conloe et al., 2004).

The elements of meaningful literacy JEPD identified by the participants aligned with the three key tenets of situated learning theory as defined in the literature: authentic context, social interaction, and constructionism (Bell, Maeng & Bianns, 2013; Green, Eady Andersen, 2018; Orgill, 2007; Schell & Black, 1997). The participants of this study valued literacy JEPD that took place in a classroom setting, that involved collaboration amongst their peers with opportunities for practice and reflection to determine how and in what ways strategies and resources could be applied and used in their classrooms with their students. The literature reviewed supports this type of contextualized learning for teachers because it maintains an authentic connection to the natural environment of the teacher, which makes it a more meaningful experience that is more likely to be applied inside of the classroom of the participant (Croft et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995).

The participants of this study admittedly had varying experiences with literacy JEPD during certain times of their careers. Although the meanings that were constructed may have been different, it was important to highlight those differences in order to inform future research.

Research Question 2: What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of the benefits of literacy job-embedded professional development in which they have been participants?

(Theme 2: Building Teacher Capacity)

According to the data collected for this study, the participants perceived benefits to participating in literacy JEPD were improved instructional practices, which the participant

believed would improve the learning outcomes of their students. The participants perceptions of the benefits of literacy JEPD connected to theme three: building teacher capacity, in that teachers perceived their participation in literacy JEPD improved their instructional practices, which correlates with building teacher capacity. Like the perceptions of the participants of this study, there is existing literature that supports the idea of improving the instructional practices of teachers using JEPD for the purpose of increasing student achievement (Avalos, 2011; Borko, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Ingvarson et al., 2005).

The participants indicated that their purpose for attending literacy JEPD was to acquire the skills, strategies and resources necessary to improve their instructional practices for the purpose of improving their student outcomes, which was found to be a benefit of attending literacy JEPD. Although the participants described the benefits of improving their instructional practices inside of the classroom, the participants never attributed increasing their student learning and achievement to the fact that they believed their instructional practices had improved as a result of attending literacy JEPD.

Theoretical perspectives of how improved instructional practices would increase student learning and achievement were provided by the participants of this study, not concrete examples of how their improved instructional practices improved the achievement of their students. Participant One described the expectation of implementing a strategy that he learned as a result of participating in literacy JEPD to increase the understandings of his students, not that it did. Participant Three expected to increase the possibility of her students being successful, but again, no concrete examples of how her perceived improved instructional practices improved the outcomes of her students. Although the participants of this study initially identified their purpose for participating in literacy JEPD was to improve their instructional practices to improve student

learning and achievement, the data collected did not reflect this correlation. The data suggested that the participants perceptions of what benefits the teacher also benefits the student.

Although there is literature that suggests that improving the instructional practices of teachers can also improve student learning and achievement (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Diaz-Maggioli, 2003; Mraz, Salas, Mercado, & Dikotla, 2016), other literature exists that suggests that not all of the literature that links improved teacher practices to improved student learning and achievement resulting from professional development has engaged in the rigor that is required to ensure the trustworthiness of their claim (Yoon et al., 2007). Guskey and Yoon (2009) and Yoon et al. (2007) suggests the use of the standards established by What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) when conducting studies that imply a connection between improved teacher learning and student learning and achievement. Yoon et al. (2007) used these standards to analyze the findings of more than 1,300 studies that linked improved teacher learning through professional development to student learning and achievement. It was found that of the 1,300 studies under review, only nine studies met the requirements suggested by WWC.

While, the data of this study also cannot support a direct correlation between the participants perceptions of improved instructional practices resulting from their participation in literacy JEPD, as well as the improved achievement and learning outcomes of their students, it is important to note that it was suggested in the data.

Research Question 3: How does literacy job-embedded professional development, in which teachers have been participants, impact teachers? (Theme 2: Building Teacher Capacity)

Overall, the participants of this study suggested that, as a result of engaging in literacy JEPD that they identified as effective, they became more confident and self-assured in their ability, which in turn improved the self-efficacy of the participants. The participants' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD connected to theme three: building teacher capacity as it related to improving their belief, or self-efficacy in their ability to teach. Self-efficacy is defined in the literature as "a personal belief that one is capable of performing in an appropriate and effective manner to attain certain goals" (Gavora, 2010, p. 17). Bandura (1997) defines self-efficacy as "the belief in one's own ability to successfully accomplish something" (p. 15). Because the understanding of self-efficacy also includes the knowledge and ability to perform successfully in a professional setting, the understanding of teacher-self efficacy shares in this meaning, yet it is specific to the teacher's perspective on his or her individual instructional abilities (Gavora, 2010). The literature refers to teacher self-efficacy as "the teacher's (i.e. self-perceived) belief in ability to plan instruction and accomplish instructional objectives" (Gavora, 2010, p. 2). Although the participants of this study perceived their instructional practices improved as a result of participating in literacy JEPD, their belief in their improved skills manifested in different professional capacities for each participant. This connects to theme two: building teacher capacity because the perceived impact of literacy JEPD improved teacher-self efficacy as a result of participants' enhanced instructional practices.

Participant One believed that because he engaged in continuous literacy JEPD, that he experienced an increased level of confidence in his ability as a literacy teacher. The data found that Participant Two associated her belief in her ability with her teacher evaluation scores.

Because those reflected improvement since participating in literacy JEPD, Participant Two also believed she was a better literacy teacher. When Participant Three was engaged with what she recognized as impactful experiences with literacy JEPD, she was motivated to invest in her own professional development by engaging in self-help behaviors to expand her knowledgebase to support students in the classroom. Participant Three also attributed her ability to help her colleagues in the area of literacy to the professional growth that she developed as a participant of literacy JEPD. Because her self-efficacy improved, she was motivated to help others. It was found that each participant identified with an increased sense of self-efficacy as a result of engaging in literacy JEPD.

Research suggests that teacher efficacy can be a benefit to teachers including a positive association with teacher efficacy and student achievement (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000; Tschannen-Morgan & Barr, 2004). The findings of this research suggested that the perceptions of the participants of this study associated participating in (self-defined) meaningful literacy JEPD that met their instructional needs, with positively impacting their teacher-eficacy (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2000).

Research Question 4: What are elementary literacy teachers' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective? (Theme 1: Meeting Instructional Needs)

The findings from this research study linked the participants' perceptions of what makes literacy JEPD effective with specific experiences with literacy JEPD that met their instructional needs (theme one). Participants of this study identified as being on-going participants of literacy JEPD for the purpose of improving their practices but did not view every literacy JEPD as effective in a way that it impacted them instructionally. The teachers in this study connected most with those literacy JEPD opportunities that included self-identified components of

effectiveness. Teachers' perceptions of effective JEPD connects to theme one: meeting instructional needs because the participants of this study found literacy JEPD to be effective when their instructional needs were met.

Specific components were described by each participant as necessary for literacy JEPD in which they had been participants to be effective to meet their instructional needs. There was an observed alignment between what the participants of this study found to be effective components of literacy JEPD, the literature reviewed on effective professional development and the revised meaning of professional learning. Consistent with the literature and the expectation of ESSA of 2015, the participants of this study identified their instructional needs being met when effective components, such as those reflected in the literature, were present: content focus, active learning, duration, coherence and collective participation (Birman et al., 2000; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011).

Teachers in this study credited their earlier experiences with literacy JEPD for their current understanding of what they needed for literacy JEPD to be effective for them as literacy teachers. The participants identified that previous literacy JEPD lacked focus and relevance to their content area. Participants also indicated that previous literacy JEPD in which they were participants were often district level mandates that took place outside of the school and lacked opportunities for active participation and collaboration. The isolated events that the participants described left them still needing instructional support. The researcher used the following memo to capture the participants perceptions of what made literacy JEPD effective for them:

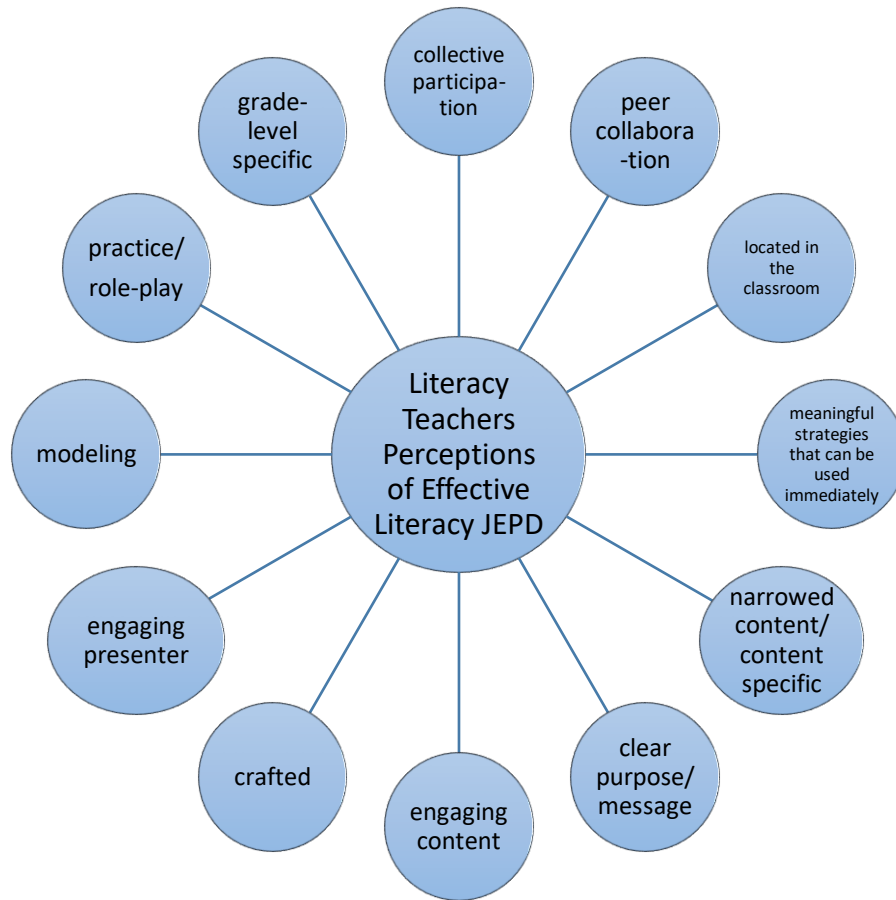


Figure 6. Participants' Perceptions of Effective Job-Embedded Professional Development.

Like the literature reviewed, the participants of this study associated specific components of literacy JEPD that were desired for the participants to find the literacy JEPD to be effective. Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) and Hirsh (2009) relates to the perspective of the participants of this study as it emphasizes the idea that the most impactful forms of professional development are those that are content specific, student focused, and enable teachers to develop aptitude to facilitate instruction in specified areas of need.

Study Implications for Future Research

The findings reported in this study contribute to the larger body of work on the phenomenon of literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD and suggests the impact that literacy job-embedded professional development has on supporting literacy teachers. As a result of discussing the findings in the previous chapter, several wonderings were raised for future research.

Future research on the phenomenon of literacy JEPD and the bounded system of the elementary literacy teacher as participants could explore how elementary literacy teachers conceptualize the definition of effective JEPD as defined in education reform and the current literature. The current research found that the participants had their own needs and expectations of literacy JEPD. These perceptions of effective literacy JEPD became expectations that the participants needed to be present for literacy JEPD to be considered effective for them. Although some of the findings aligned to the body of literature that outlines the components necessary for effective professional development (Birman et al., 2000; Desimone, 2009; Desimone, 2011), as well as the definition of effective professional development in education reform (ESSA, 2015), future research could explore the meaning of effective literacy JEPD from the literacy teachers' perspective.

Additional research could consider how effective literacy JEPD is conceptualized by its participants. An exploration into understanding what teachers deem necessary for literacy JEPD to be effective can impact how schools design and implement literacy JEPD for teachers.

Concluding Remarks

There have been three waves of education reform since 1965. All of which designed to improve the state of education by increasing student achievement. The literature suggests that

the best way to increase student achievement is to improve the instructional practices of teachers through effective professional development (Borko, 2009). The researcher decided to examine the phenomenon that has been given so much credit in policy and research, from the perspective of those who were charged with affecting change, the teachers. The present study explored elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy JEPD. The purpose of this study was to gain insight of the phenomenon of literacy JEPD from the perspective of its participants.

This study found that, although the perceptions of each participant of the study was subjective to the experiences of the participant, the impact of literacy JEPD was contingent upon it meeting the expectations of the participants and being meaningful in the sense that it met the instructional needs of the participants and provided strategies and resources that were transferrable to the classroom setting. The results of this study suggested that literacy teachers perceptions of literacy JEPD were form based on their past and contemporary experiences with the phenomenon. It was these experiences that aided the participants in being able to define for themselves what components were necessary for effective literacy JEPD. The participants associated their instructional needs being met, improved instructional practices and increased self-efficacy to their experiences with literacy JEPD.

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Appendix A

(Invitation Email and Face to Face Script)

Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

Elementary Literacy Teachers' Perceptions on the Impact of Literacy focused Job-Embedded Professional Development

I am seeking elementary literacy teachers that teach in the urban Mid-South to participate in a study designed to explore elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of literacy focused job-embedded professional development.

The purpose of this study is to look at JEPD from the perspective of elementary literacy teachers in order to determine the impact that literacy focused JEPD has according to the participants of the JEPD.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants will complete three interviews over a three-week time frame with one additional meeting with the researcher to member check the interpretations of the interviews. There are no benefits associated with participating in this study and you may opt out of participating at any time during the study.

To learn more about this research, contact Racquel Harris at rwatkins@memphis.edu, or (901) 490-4904.

This research is conducted through the Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership at the University of Memphis under the supervision of Dr. J. Helen Perkins, jhperkins@memphis.edu.

Appendix B

Consent Statement

ELEMENTARY LITERACY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE IMPACT OF JOB-EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Racquel Harris, of the University of Memphis, Department of Instruction and Curriculum Leadership, is in charge of the study. She is being guided by Dr. J. Helen Perkins, advisor and dissertation committee chair.

The purpose of this research is to explore three elementary literacy teachers' perceptions on the impact of job-embedded professional development. This study will include three participants. You are being invited to participate because you meet the following criteria that makes you eligible to participate:

- current elementary literacy teacher employed within an urban school district in this southern state for a minimum of three years
- professional elementary teaching license in elementary education issued by the Department of Education in this southern state (excluding teachers working on an alternate license)
- ongoing participant of literacy focused job-embedded professional development
- meet the yearly average professional development hours as required by this southern state and the urban school district (five days of in-service education annually).

Should you agree to participate you will be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire online, and three interviews that will be audio recorded. It will take approximately one hour to conduct each interview. Your participation should take about three consecutive weeks. Participating in this study is completely voluntary and if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any point. You may choose not to continue with the interviews.

As a participant in this research study, there may not be any direct benefits for you. You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

We will make every effort to keep the information collected from you private. We will protect the confidentiality of your research records by deidentifying the data to potentially use for further research. Waiving documented consent and using a pseudonym in lieu of your name on all research

documents, including audio recordings of interviews, are the protection measures that will be used to deidentify the data.

If you have questions about the research you may contact Racquel Harris at rwatkins@memphis.edu, or (901) 490-4904 and Dr. J. Helen Perkins, jhperkns@memphis.edu, or (901) 678-4195.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT

You may print a copy of this consent document for your records.

Please click on the link to confirm or decline your participation in this study
<https://www.esurveycreator.com/s/d2f92ab>

Selecting “YES” indicates that you:

- Are 18 years of age or older
- Have read the above information
- Voluntarily agree to participate in this study
- Meet the criteria that makes you eligible to participate in this study

Selecting “NO” indicates that you decline the invitation to participate in this study.

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

- 1.) What is your current title? Please list all positions that you currently hold.
- 2.) Please list any previous positions, other than teaching positions that you have held.
- 3.) What grades have you taught?
PreK KK 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th Other (Specify)_____
- 4.) What grade do you currently teach?
PreK KK 1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th Other (Specify)_____
- 5.) Identify each degree received in the field of education.
Bachelor Masters Ed.S. Ed.D. PhD
- 6.) How many years of teaching experience do you currently have?
1-3 Years 4-7 Years 8-15 Years 15+_____ (Please specify)
- 7.) How many hours of job-embedded professional development have you completed for the current school-year?
- 8.) Please circle one: Male Female
- 9.) Please circle one: Black White Asian Hispanic Other_____

Appendix D

Three Interview Series Protocol:

Interview Protocol: Elementary Literacy Teacher Perceptions on the Impact of Job-embedded Professional Development

Interview One (contextual background from their **life history**): How did the participant come to engage in literacy focused JEPD? What was the participant’s life history before engaging in literacy focused JEPD?

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interview Questions	Probes
<p>Q1. How did you come to engage in literacy focused JEPD?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How did you initially come to be a participant in literacy focused JEPD? b) How would you describe the types of literacy focused JEPD that you initially engaged in when you began your career in teaching? c) How was the literacy focused JEPDs that you participated in selected? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If self-selected, what process did you go through to select literacy focused JEPDs (motivation)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would you describe your earlier experiences with selecting literacy focused JEPD? • If not self-selected, how did you learn about the literacy focused JEPDs that were selected for you in the past? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How would you describe your earlier experiences with how you were informed of the

	<p>literacy focused JEPDs that you would be attending?</p> <p>d) Explain the purpose of your participation in literacy focused JEPDs that you attended?</p> <p>e) What did you expect from the literacy focused JEPDs that you previously attended?</p>
<p>Q2. How would you describe your earliest experiences with JEPD?</p>	<p>Probe: Walk me through your previous literacy focused JEPD experiences.</p> <p>a) How did these experiences impact you as a teacher during that time of your teaching career (instruction, professionalism, engagement with students)?</p>
<p>Q3. Walk me through one of your earlier and most memorable experiences with literacy focused JEPD?</p>	<p>a.) How did this earlier experience with literacy focused JEPD impact you at that time?</p> <p>Probe: How would you describe your instructional practices as a result of engaging in literacy focused JEPD during that time?</p> <p>a.) Who are the people that you associate with these experiences?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues • School-level instructional leaders • District-level instructional leaders <p>b.) Location</p> <p>c.) Content</p> <p>d.) Duration</p> <p>e.) Activity</p> <p>f.) Implementation in classroom</p>
<p>Q4. How would you describe your life history prior to engaging in literacy focused JEPD?</p>	<p>Probe: What was your professional life like prior to engaging in literacy focused JEPD?</p> <p>a) Describe in detail your instructional practices prior to literacy focused JEPD.</p> <p>b) Start from the beginning and walk through a typical literacy lesson prior to engaging in JEPD.</p>

Q5. Is there anything else about your life history with literacy focused JEPD that I did not ask that you would like to share with me?	
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Interview Two (contemporary experience: explain current experiences with JEPD/meanings constructed): What is it like for the participant to be presently engaged in literacy focused JEPD? What are the details of literacy focused JEPD and how it impacts the instructional practices of elementary literacy teachers?

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interview Questions	Probes
Q1. How would describe what it is like for you to be presently engaged in literacy focused JEPD now?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Describe the role of the facilitator. b) Describe the role of the participants c) Describe the space d) Describe the location e) Describe the content f) Describe the teacher actions g) Explain the expectations h) What are the various types of JEPD that you engage in presently? i) How are JEPDs selected for you today?
Q2. Reconstruct a typical JEPD from beginning to end.	<p>Probe: Walk me through your current literacy focused JEPD experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> b) How do these experiences impact you as a teacher now (instruction, professionalism, engagement with students)? <p>Probe: How would you describe your instructional practices now as a result of engaging in literacy focused JEPD?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g.) Who are the people that you associate with this experience? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Colleagues • School-level instructional leaders

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District-level instructional leaders <p>h.) Location i.) Content j.) Duration k.) Activity l.) Implementation in classroom</p>
<p>Q3. Describe in detail the types of literacy related JEPDs that you participate in and why?</p>	<p>a) Describe in detail the experiences that led you to gravitate towards the types of literacy focused JEPDs that you select.</p> <p>b) What is it about this type(s) of literacy focused JEPD that attract you?</p> <p>c) Describe some consistent components that you need in literacy focused JEPD?</p> <p>d) How are you impacted by participating in the literacy focused JEPDs that you engage in.</p> <p>e) What are your pre-established expectations of the literacy focused JEPD? How were these developed.</p> <p>f) How would you describe some consistent components that you always observe in literacy focused JEPD?</p>
<p>Q4. Walk me through one of your most memorable experiences with literacy focused JEPD in which you have been a current participant?</p>	<p>a.) Describe the components that existed in this literacy focused JEPD? That made it memorable.</p> <p>b.) How has this current experience with literacy focused JEPD impacted you at this time?</p> <p>c.) How have the most recent literacy focused JEPD been the most impactful and in what ways.</p> <p>d.) If your instructional strategies have been impacted, how have your instructional strategies changed as a result of engaging in current literacy focused JEPD?</p>

<p>Q5. Describe in detail a recent lesson that you executed that was impacted by a literacy focused JEPD.</p>	<p>a.) If your instructional strategies have not been impacted, what was not present that was necessary for you to impact your instructional strategies? b.) Describe in detail a recent lesson that you needed assistance with that a possible literacy focused JEPD could have impacted.</p>
<p>Q6. How would you describe your instructional practices as a result of engaging in literacy focused JEPD?</p>	
<p>Q7. How would you describe the quality of your current professional life as an elementary literacy teacher as a result of engaging in JEPD?</p>	
<p>Q8. Is there anything else about your current experience with literacy focused JEPD that I did not ask that you would like to share with me?</p>	

Interview Three (reflection on meaning): What does it mean to the participant to engage in JEPD now? How does the participant make sense of their present life in the context of their life experiences with JEPD?

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Interview Questions	Probes
<p>Q1. What does it mean to be a participant in literacy focused JEPD now (during this current time in your professional career as a teacher)?</p>	<p>a.) Describe what participating in literacy focused JEPD does for you? b.) Explain in detail what participating in literacy focused JEPD means to you as an elementary literacy teacher?</p>
<p>Q2. How do you make sense of your present life in the context of your life experiences with literacy focused of JEPD?</p>	<p>a.) Given what you have said about your life before participating in literacy focused JEPD, and given what you have said about your engagement with literacy focused JEPD now, how do you understand literacy focused JEPD in your life?</p>

<p>Q3. What does literacy focused JEPD mean to you and your instructional practices?</p>	
<p>Q4. Based on your past and present experiences with literacy focused JEPD, how would you define effective literacy focused JEPD?</p>	<p>a.) What makes literacy focused JEPD effective?</p> <p>b.) Describe some consistent components that you expect to be present in literacy focused JEPD?</p> <p>c.) Explain why you do or do not have expectations for literacy focused JEPD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your expectations of effective literacy focused JEPD? <p>d.) What are your expected outcomes of literacy focused JEPD?</p>
<p>Q5. Describe what it means to your instructional practice to be a participant of effective (as defined by the participant) literacy focused JEPD.</p>	<p>e.) How has this impacted your practice?</p>
<p>Q6. Is there anything else about the meanings that you have constructed about your past and present experiences with literacy focused JEPD that I did not ask that you would like to share with me?</p>	

PRO-FY2019-469 - Initial: Approval - Exempt

irb@memphis.edu

Wed 4/17/2019 7:26 AM

To: J Helen Perkins (jhperkns) <jhperkns@memphis.edu>; Raquel D Harris (rwatkins) <rwatkins@memphis.edu>



Institutional Review Board
Division of Research and Innovation
Office of Research Compliance
University of Memphis
315 Admin Bldg
Memphis, TN 38152-3370

April 17, 2019

PI Name: Raquel Harris
Co-Investigators:
Advisor and/or Co-PI: J Perkins
Submission Type: Initial
Title: Elementary Literacy Teacher Perceptions On the Impact of Job-embedded Professional Development
IRB ID : #PRO-FY2019-469
Exempt Approval: April 16, 2019

The University of Memphis Institutional Review Board, FWA00006815, has reviewed your submission in accordance with all applicable statuses and regulations as well as ethical principles.

Approval of this project is given with the following obligations:

1. When the project is finished a completion submission is required
2. Any changes to the approved protocol requires board approval prior to implementation
3. When necessary submit an incident/adverse events for board review
4. Human subjects training is required to be kept current at citiprogram.org every 2 years

For any additional questions or concerns please contact us at irb@memphis.edu or 901.678.2705

10/14/2019

Mail - Raquel D Harris (rwatkins) - Outlook

Thank you,
James P. Whelan, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair
The University of Memphis.

<https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAQkADAyYzEwMjk1LWQ5NjEiNDM1Ni04ZTMwLWY0ZTBINGY4MwYwMAAQAFHWYcrKX1FGI7AfDve2J7g...> 2/2