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Instructional Strategies Teachers Use to Improve Literacy Performance of Children in Poverty

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Walden University

College of Education

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Carlene Miller-Thompson

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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Walden University

2020

Abstract

Instructional Strategies Teachers Use to Improve Literacy Performance of Children in
Poverty

by

Carlene Miller-Thompson

Project Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Walden University

2020

Abstract

Poverty has an on-going and broadening negative effect on students' academic performance. At the research school, 78% of the students in poverty performed below proficiency on the national literacy test in 2012. In 2013, the number was 68%, and in 2014, 80% performed below proficiency. The purpose of this research study was to explore the instructional strategies that teachers are using with these students in poverty. Piaget's cognitive development and Vygotsky's social development theories established the conceptual framework for this study. The research questions that this study sought to answer at the local school setting were what instructional strategies teachers are using, which strategies teachers believe are most effective, how prepared do teachers believe they are to teach these students, and what assistance would teachers like to meet the academic needs of their students. In this instrumental case study, a convenience sample of 4 teachers was interviewed, and 1 lesson plan per teacher was reviewed. Interview data were analyzed inductively using the thematic approach and coding. A checklist was used to analyze lesson plans for instructional strategies used. From the findings, 5 major themes were developed: use of students' prior knowledge/experience, cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are effective in teaching students in poverty, limited resources affect student learning, teachers need to be equipped with necessary sources to teach, and more and frequent professional development in literacy skills is needed. A 3-day professional development workshop was developed. The study findings can contribute to social change by increasing teachers' use of effective instructional strategies to improve learning and literacy achievement of students in poverty.

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Dedication

This study is dedicated to my husband, Carl Thompson, and my four children, Kerone Thompson, Carl Thompson Jr., Christopher Wilson, and Tenoy Wilson. They were the ones who withstood the test and tolerated me while completing this study.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Introduction.....	1
The Local Problem.....	2
Rationale	7
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level.....	7
Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature.....	12
Definition of Terms.....	14
Significance.....	14
Guiding/Research Questions.....	15
Literature Review.....	17
Introduction.....	17
Conceptual Framework.....	18
Review of the Broader Problem.....	20
Poverty and Education	21
Socioeconomic Factors and Poverty.....	23
Nutrition and Poverty.....	25
School Readiness and Poverty	26
Poor School Attendance.....	27
Teachers, Low SES Students, and Academic Achievement.....	29
Effective Strategies for Teaching Students in Poverty	31

Conclusion	40
Implications.....	42
Summary	43
Section 2: The Methodology.....	45
Research Design and Approach	45
Participants.....	48
Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship	49
Gaining Access to Research Site	50
Measures for Ethical Protection.....	51
Data Collection	52
Interviews.....	52
Document Review.....	55
The Role of the Researcher.....	56
Data Analysis	58
Credibility and Trustworthiness.....	62
Reliability and Transferability	64
Data Analysis Results	65
How the Data Were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded	65
Findings.....	66
Findings From Lesson Plans.....	80
Themes From the Findings	81
Interpretation of the Findings.....	85

Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	90
Summary and Project Deliverable as an Outcome	91
Conclusion	91
Section 3: The Project.....	93
Introduction.....	93
Rationale	94
Review of the Literature	95
Adult Learning.....	96
Professional Development	97
Professional Development and Differentiated Instruction.....	98
Professional Development and Cooperative Learning	99
Teacher Collaboration.....	100
Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	102
Parental Involvement	104
Conclusion	105
Project Description.....	106
Resources and Supports	107
Potential Barriers	108
Proposal for Implementation and Timeline	108
Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others.....	110
Project Evaluation Plan.....	111
Project Implications	111

Local Community	111
Far Reaching.....	113
Conclusion	114
Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions.....	115
Project Strengths and Limitations.....	115
Projects Strengths.....	115
Limitations	116
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	117
Scholarship.....	119
Project Development and Evaluation.....	120
Leadership and Change.....	122
Reflection on Importance of the Work	123
Analysis of Self as A Scholar	124
Analysis of Self as a Project Developer.....	126
Analysis of Self as a Practitioner	127
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	128
Potential Impact for Social Change	128
Applications and Directions for Future Research.....	129
Conclusion	130
References.....	132
Appendix A: Professional Development Workshop.....	174
Appendix B: Interview Protocol.....	205

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Checklist207

List of Tables

Table 1. Literacy Performance from 2012 to 2017 for Students in Poverty.....3

Table 2. Evidence of Objectives and Strategies in Lesson Plans80

Table 3. Summary of Major and Minor Themes Derived From Research Data.....82

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

The educational issue of concern is the low academic performance in literacy of children in poverty at Hill Elementary (pseudonym), a school embedded in the green hills of Northwestern Clarendon between the rugged Mocho Mountains in rural Jamaica. The school population consists of 45 students and 10 teachers. The grades range from early childhood to Grade 6. The purpose of the study was to explore the instructional strategies teachers are using to teach students in poverty and learn what resources and support they believe are necessary for helping their students. Poverty limits the availability of resources necessary for an adequate education. These resources include the basic necessities of adequate and proper nutrition, clothing, and shelter. Other necessities in the educational arena include books and other learning aids (Geronimus, Pearson, & Linnenbringer, 2015). The inadequacy of these resources negatively affects the academic success rate at Hill Elementary.

In Jamaica, the 2016 poverty rate for 2.8 million citizens was 14.5% living below poverty (Thompson, 2017; United Nations Development Programme in Jamaica, 2016). As a result of poverty, many Jamaican citizens lack basic amenities such as food, clothing, shelter, and education (Thompson, 2013). On a daily basis there are many thousands of people who lack the economic wherewithal to meet their daily needs. Many have lost hope in a nation where the uncertainty of their immediate prospects is widespread (Thompson, 2013). Thompson (2013) opined that very few Jamaicans were “born into money, [and] the escapees from this dungeon of poverty have been those who

have been able to secure a sound education” (p. 13). Due to the low socioeconomic conditions of some parents, their children are unable to perform as well as their same-age counterparts of a higher socioeconomic status (SES; Thompson, 2013). Parents of students in poverty are less involved in their children’s prospects for academic achievement due to low self-esteem regarding their ability to help their children (Doi, Fujiwara, Isumi, & Ochi, 2019). The effects of poverty compromise the quality of education received by the students (Doi et al., 2019; Hood & Walters, 2017; Li, Johnson, Musci, & Riley, 2017). The way for families to move from poverty is through increased education (Thompson, 2013).

According to Wong (2018), schools that have students with high poverty levels do not perform as well as those with lower levels of poverty. Research conducted by the Ministry of Education (MOE; 217) in Jamaica indicated the optimistic influence of effective instructional strategies on students’ achievement. Academic success can be achieved particularly through teachers’ use of diverse teaching strategies, culturally responsive instructional skills, and teacher development (Valiandes, 2015). In Section 1, I will discuss the (a) background to the problem, (b) indication of the local problem, (c) rationale of the local problem, (d) evidence of the problem in the professional literature, (e) guiding research questions, (f) review of literature based on the topic, (g) significance of the problem, and (i) implications for the study.

The Local Problem

The local problem that prompted this study is that of low literacy performance of students living in poverty at Hill Elementary. The low literacy performance caused the

school to be looked at as a failing school. The school is a low-income school; approximately 80% of the students are from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The remaining 20% of the students who attend the school are children of the teachers who work at the school and do not fall into the low-income category. The students in poverty at this school are always scoring very low on their literacy tests. The problem of low literacy performance at Hill Elementary school has been an issue of concern over the years (see Table 1). The results of performance testing of these students in 2012 to 2013 indicated that 78% of students scored below the proficiency level (MOE, 2013). In 2013 to 2014, the results showed that 68% scored below the proficiency level (MOE, 2014), and in 2014 to 2015, the results showed that 80% performed below proficiency level on the literacy test given nationally (MOE, 2015). From 2016 to 2017, the results showed that 50% scored below the proficiency level (MOE, 2017). There was improvement in proficiency levels in the academic years from 2015 to 2017 compared to 2012 to 2015. However, there is still concern as the literacy target is 100%. Observation of the test scores on a class basis also revealed this decline.

Table 1

Literacy Performance From 2012 to 2017 for Students in Poverty

Academic year	Percentage of students at Hill Elementary below proficiency level	Percentage of students in Jamaica below the proficiency level
2012-2013	78%	40%
2013-2014	68%	42%
2014-2015	80%	15%
2015-2016	50%	35%
2016-2017	50%	25%

Perry, Braren, and Blair (2018) stated that a literacy gap exists between children who live in poverty and those who do not live in poverty. A literate person is someone who is able to read and write and is considered to be educated (Perry et al., 2018). A literacy gap shows that there is the observation that children who live in poverty are less able to read and write than those who do not (Perry et al., 2018).

There is a link between poverty and the literacy gap (Perry et al., 2018). Poverty is linked to the literacy gap in three ways within the context of this study: There is a gap between (a) the students and the text, (b) the teacher and students, and (c) the students and their peers (Parrett & Budge, 2016). The gap between students and the text exists due to readability issues related to background knowledge; students' experience, knowledge, and motivation; and their tolerance levels for challenge (Solano & Weyer, 2017). The student-teacher relationship is a factor with students in low SES groups because the relationship affects students' academic achievement (Xuan et al., 2019). The student-to-peer gap includes family backgrounds, culture, language, expectations, and access to books, literacy levels, and learning levels within the classrooms (Ellis & Sosu, 2014; Gorski, 2018). While the community along with the home can determine the background knowledge and the foundation from which students come to school, the teachers should be equipped to minimize these gaps by using a variety of strategies and teaching techniques. It is imperative that teachers acknowledge that these gaps exist and plan how to close them through teaching and learning in their literacy.

Students from working class homes in Jamaica are faced with a serious lack of resources due to low income and poverty, both physical and educational, which are

needed for them to function effectively (Roofe, 2018). Roofe (2018) posited that a lack of resources extends beyond students' home and communities. Due to a lack of parental support, students from urban communities in Jamaica do not perform as well as their counterparts in other primary schools in literacy (Roofe, 2018). In Jamaica, a quarter of the population live in poverty (UNICEF, 2018). The government has implemented social security programs to halt child poverty. However, the problem of children living in poverty continues to be a social problem (UNICEF, 2018).

In Jamaica, 1.1 million people are faced with intergenerational poverty (Government of Jamaica, 2017). Jamaica was ranked 87 out of 187 countries in poverty in 2018 (Statistical Institute of Jamaica, 2018). Based on gross domestic product, Jamaica ranked 116 out of 191 in a 2019 list of the world's richest countries (Ventura, 2019). Poverty is an issue in the school district where Hill Elementary is located. According to Statistical Institute of Jamaica (2018), 85% of the people living in the district live below the poverty line.

Miller (2016) hypothesized about various factors that influence the extent of the literacy achievement gap among students living in poverty and those who do not. The most important contextual variable reported by Miller is the SES of the pupils within the school. Ngonghala et al. (2017) showed that the poverty of parents results in irregular attendance of their children at school. It was revealed that from an international perspective, students who grew up in poverty perform lower on standardized tests than students from a higher SES background (Ngonghala et al., 2017). Children of poor

families are more likely to fail in school due to risks associated with the low literacy scores and their achievement gap (Solano & Weyer, 2017).

In poverty-stricken communities, many factors affect children and place them at risk of underperformance in school. These factors include lack of nutrition, lack of exposure to early stimulation, and lack of environmental prints (e.g., books and other reading materials). These conditions associated with poverty are identified as major risk factors in the success of students in the educational environment (Manini, 2018; UNICEF, 2018). There are several factors within the Jamaican communities that place children of poor families at risk. These include stereotypes about poor communities, parents' financial status, limited employability, volatile neighborhoods, garrison communities (poor inner-city communities in Jamaica controlled by either of the main political parties), homelessness, and lack of exposure to adequate educational materials and experiences (Miller, 2016). In addition, in Jamaica the influence of Creole spoken in many homes affects students' literacy performance (Moodie-Reid, 2016). Addressing many of these factors was beyond the scope of this study.

As indicated earlier, the focus of this study was the instructional strategies teachers at Hill Elementary use with their students in efforts to bridge the gap between their exposure and experiences at home and what they need for academic success, specifically the improvement of literacy scores. To address the low performance literacy problem, I used a qualitative research design to determine the teaching methods currently used in teaching students with lower economic backgrounds and discuss the perceived needs that the teachers feel are necessary for improvement in test scores.

Rationale

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

This qualitative case study is important and is needed for two reasons. First, there is the ever-deepening crisis of poverty in the district and Hill Elementary, and students are not able to perform as effectively as their counterparts. These are concerns of the administrator and teachers within the district as the level of education reflected by these assessment scores are of importance to these students' ability to compete in society. When children are in poverty, many factors affect their learning. Research in the area of poverty and academic success has shown that students in Jamaica and other countries who lack reading materials in the home has resulted in low achievement on national state tests and in schools (Bergeson, 2006; Holiness, 2018; Manini, 2018). The effects of poverty increase as a child continues to live in poverty. In Jamaica, poverty has been an indicator for students' academic performance. In 2016, the literacy specialist for the region where Hill Elementary is located reported that due to the incidence of poverty in most of the deep rural areas, literacy was at an all-time low within the region. The literacy coordinator, who manages all literacy specialists, called on teachers to be engaged in intense training workshops to close the literacy gap for students in the district and the entire region. In 2016, the literacy coordinator said that the problem of literacy is a grave one and that the region has seen the largest failing rate in Jamaica.

As reported earlier in Table 1, the literacy results at Hill Elementary for these children are 68% nonmastery and 32% mastery on the literacy test done in 2013 to 2014 (MOE, 2013). During the 2012 to 2013 school year, 78% of the students performed

below proficiency in literacy; during the 2013 to 2014 school year, 68% performed below proficiency; and during the 2014 to 2015 school year, 80% performed below proficiency. Also, in 2015 to 2016 and in 2016 to 2017, students performed at 50% below proficiency.

The results of the Grade One Individual Learning Profile, Grade 4 Literacy Test, and Grade Six Achievement Test also showed that children in the district were affected by low literacy scores in the year 2012 to 2013, 2014 to 2015, 2015 to 2016, and 2016 to 2017 (MOE, 2017). There are three groups that see low literacy as a setback: the MOE, school principals, and the National Education Inspectorate (NEI). The MOE (2015) sees low literacy as a grave problem as The Education Task Force in Jamaica sees this as a major setback for the country to meet its literacy targets for the 2030 vision. The literacy target was 85% at the proficiency level in literacy by 2015 and that by 2030 the country will be 100% literate (MOE, 2014). The MOE (2015) also highlighted some factors that contribute to low literacy performance in the school and the country at large. Some such factors are the inability of some teachers to successfully impart aspects of the curriculum based on the instructional strategies they use. The NEI (2013) stated that these children need immediate support within the school community. The 2018 NEI report also stated that children in poverty should be given special provisions in terms of breakfast as some of these children leave home without having breakfast.

Second, this study is of utmost importance because, as previously mentioned, the school has also been burdened with low literacy performance. Hill Elementary has introduced several interventions to address this problem. The problem of low literacy scores among children in poverty and low performance at all levels has become a grave

concern. Teachers in the school are concerned with the present results on monthly assessments. Based on the reading tests and Grade 4 literacy tests given on May 16, 2012 and June 20, 2012, the fourth-grade students' pass rate was at an all-time low (MOE, 2012a). The literacy results for 2015 to 2016 was a 50% pass rate for fourth grade (MOE, 2016). However, comprehension skills were at an all-time low of 25%. These students were unable to answer questions based on comprehension passages (MOE, 2012b, 2017). In 2016, there was a 50% pass rate overall at Hill Elementary, yet students in poverty were still falling below the proficiency level for fourth grade students. For students to be considered proficient, they need to score 45% on comprehension, writing, and word recognition out of a possible 100%. According to the NEI (2013), the teaching and learning aspect with regard to poor children was inadequate, and students were not performing in a satisfactory manner at Hill elementary in 2013, which is when I began this research. Due to the underperformance of the students in the Grade 4 class, the school was given an unsatisfactory grade (NEI, 2013). Another NEI report of 2018 stated that students at the school are still performing below the national proficiency level even though the school achieved a 50% pass rate (NEI, 2018).

The effects of poverty on student success are evident throughout the entire educational system. According to a Hill Elementary administrator during a meeting with teachers on June 12, 2016, teachers are struggling with these problems within their own classes. The administrator also suggested that a remedial reading intervention program be planned to address these children. Literacy levels have been a problem in neighboring schools in the district as well. The MOE (2013, 2017) has placed literacy coaches in

schools to assist with the problem. The MOE (2013, 2017) set a target for the school at 85% for literacy in the year 2014, but this was not met due to the continued low performance of the students in poverty in the school.

The MOE is implementing a comprehensive literacy program to assist teachers with new instructional strategies that will improve low literacy performance in Jamaica (MOE, 2014). In 2009, literacy and language arts results were 57%, 58% in 2010, 57% in 2011, 60% in 2012, and in 2013, 62% passing language at the Grade 6 level in the country (MOE, 2014). In 2015, at the Grade 4 level, 45% passed language and literacy; in 2016 and 2017, there was 50% pass rate (MOE, 2017). Some issues that contributed to low literacy performance is the ability of some teachers to implement aspects of the curricula (MOE, 2014). One area the MOE report mentioned specifically was the special education needs of some students in poverty also resulting in poor literacy results. In Jamaica in 2009, when the literacy test first became a national exam, 67% students in primary school at Grade 4 passed the literacy exam, which means that 33% of students failed the test (MOE, 2014). After careful review, the MOE crafted a Literacy Improvement Initiative in 2014. This Literacy Improvement Initiative was crafted to improve the literacy performance of students (MOE, 2014). The initiative had seven goals, which included student achievement, teacher preparation, a bilingual policy, literacy support, equal opportunity in education, stakeholder involvement, and adult education (MOE, 2014). During 2016 to 2017, 50% of the students passed the literacy test, still with 50% failing.

Students' test scores continue to be low, and there is little or no improvement. Teachers do not appear to be equipped to manage the literacy aspects of the curricula (MOE, 2017). Therefore, my aim for conducting this study was to identify the strategies used by teachers to teach these students and what professional development (PD) the teachers might need to help these students.

Students of high-income families are better able to adjust to various methods used to teach them as they arrive at school with knowledge of print (Reid, 2018). Such methods are cooperative learning, technology aided instruction, use of audiovisual to teach students phonetics skills, and teachers establishing a caring environment that builds students' trust and confidence. Reid (2018) also reiterated that this poverty index has taken a hold on students' performance. At this point, the MOE has placed special needs teachers in a cluster of schools to remedy the problem (Reid, 2018).

Currently, there is some indication that if effective educational strategies are not implemented to assist these children living in poverty, academic performance will continue to fall below the national average (MOE, 2016). The focus of this study was on exploring instructional strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty to determine which strategies can be used to improve students' performance. The literacy level of the children living in the district was still at an all-time low in 2016 despite efforts from MOE to improve literacy results (MOE, 2016). According to the literacy coordinator in 2016, the effect of poverty on these children is devastating. The literacy coordinator also stated that the district would not be able to meet the MOE's target of 85% literacy by 2018. Jamaica's low literacy performance is evident among boys and

girls from poor communities, and there are ongoing concerns about the low literacy scores (Roofe, 2018). Even though there have been many curriculum reforms, there is still the problem of low literacy and overall performance of students in poverty (Roofe, 2018).

Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature

The relationship of poverty and academic performance exists beyond the borders of Jamaica. In 2013, 80% of low-income U.S. fourth graders were not reading proficiently, according to National Assessment Educational Progress data (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). National Assessment Educational Progress results for all students in 2017 showed 22% of all students who were eligible for free/reduced-price school lunch, an indicator of low family income, were at or above proficient in reading (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). These statistics are a problem as low reading proficiency could affect student success in later grades and life (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). Low income children are among the worst in reading scores (Reid, 2018). Children of low income will not be able to attain economic security as adults (The Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2014). In the United Kingdom, there is also evidence that literacy is a grave problem. According to Morrisroe (2014) and Unium and Mishra (2017), literacy is a factor which holds back the recovery of the United Kingdom economy. Low literacy in the United Kingdom is causing a low employment rate, and low literacy is also associated with students being less employable than others (Morrisroe, 2014; Unium & Mishra, 2017).

Burns, Tomita, and Lund (2017) stated that poverty affects children learning to read in many ways, such as lack of exposure to language. Poverty also changes the way the brain matures, and children experience high levels of stress (Burns et al., 2017). Wool, Fermanich, and Reichard (2015) revealed that poverty results in language gaps and has a profound effect on children's language development resulting in low literacy performance. Poverty is a direct observable effect on students' literacy learning and academic achievement, and poverty affects students' learning in several ways and in different mechanisms (Baker, Farrie, Johnson, Luhm, & Sciarra, 2017; Baker, Sciarra, & Farrie, 2014). Growing up in poverty can have a negative effect on children's academic capabilities and can also influence their academic success throughout their entire life (Solano & Weyer, 2017). Students who fall in the poverty index are categorized in the low 19th percentile based on assessments, whereas those in the middle class are ranked in the 66th percentile on assessments in the United States (Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Solano & Weyer, 2017). Low literacy rates have also existed among males compared to females on the Grade 4 literacy test performance over the years (Beersingh, 2016). Students from low SES suffer from low literacy rates in Jamaica (Moodie-Reid, 2016).

The purpose of this qualitative study was twofold. First, I wanted to explore the instructional strategies that teachers were currently using in advancing the educational performance of children in poverty. Second, I wanted to determine the additional resources and support that teachers believed were needed to improve the performance of their students.

Definition of Terms

Instructional strategies: Strategies used by teachers to teach students and assist them in becoming independent learners (Meador, 2018).

Poor academic performance: Relates to students performing below acceptable standards on state and national tests. MOE (2015) defined poor academic performance as those students who performed below the national average on national tests.

Poverty: Relates to people in society who are not able to provide for themselves economically. Payne (2010) stated that poverty as the “extent to which an individual does without resources” (p. 7). Poverty is a deprivation of income and basic human needs (Groce et al., 2011).

Significance

The significance of this study is practical and theoretical. The theoretical stance is based on the extension of current understandings of teaching strategies that teachers are using to teach students living in poverty (Meyer, 2017). Research related to effective teaching is needed for all types of learning communities, as there is no one teaching strategy that will fit all schools because of content variations and student differences.

In the practical sense, this research can benefit teachers in that a study of this kind has never been done in the community where Hill Elementary is located. Because my focus was on students living in poverty, understanding their academic needs is a practical way to help the school to improve its literacy performance. Teachers can learn what instructional strategies other teachers are using as well as identify areas that they may need help in to better teach students.

Identifying commonalities and specific characteristics of instructional strategies can also assist in improving the quality of teacher training programs at universities and PD workshops to assist students living in poverty. With the information learned from this study, teachers can also be better equipped to teach students in poverty. The objectives for this qualitative case study were to discover what strategies teachers are using and then identify whether there is a need to provide them with more information about concepts and best practices that they can implement to help students overcome poor performance. It will also provide in-depth information to social scientists, educators, and policymakers to conceptualize the needs of students living in poverty and the teachers teaching them in this particular location.

This problem was chosen because children from low SES are underperforming and are having learning difficulties compared to their counterparts (Solano & Weyer, 2017). One of the best ways of understanding what improves the academic performance of students living in poverty is to consult the teachers who are teaching them, discover what instructional strategies they are using and what they are lacking in their teaching profession, and then provide them with the support to do their job effectively.

Guiding/Research Questions

The central research question that I addressed in this study was as follows: What are the strategies teachers are using to teach students in poverty and what resources do they believe are necessary for helping these children? There is a significant difference in family income and the social emotional level with parents' educational level, income, and occupation (Mohamed & Toran, 2018). According to Mohamed and Toran (2018), when

family income levels were used as criteria for analysis in the achievement gap, significant differences in student achievement were found. Meyer (2017) has also shown that teachers believe students in poverty go through chronic stressors and are more stressed than their counterparts, so they need specific strategies and instruction to assist them to learn and develop. Teachers believe that students who are from families in consistent poverty will most likely struggle academically (Meyer, 2017). In another study, teachers believed that poor children are not the same cognitively, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally, so specific instruction must be tailored to suit their needs (Jarosz & Mather, 2018). Teachers also cited that children from poverty are more likely struggle with engagement in school (Jarosz & Mather, 2018; Pogrow, 2009; Wheaton, 2018).

The type of research needed to understand and impact the local problem is an instrumental case study in which I examined strategies that teachers in Hill Elementary use to teach students in poverty. This study complements literature that already exists and ultimately open teachers' knowledge to new and existing strategies that best work for students in poverty with the culminating project. The foregoing inquiry was framed by the following research questions:

1. What instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching students in poverty?
2. What instructional strategies do teachers believe are most effective for teaching students in poverty?
3. How equipped do teachers believe they are to teach students in poverty?

4. What assistance (e.g., professional development, training) would teachers like from the Hill Elementary administration and school district to better meet the academic needs of students in poverty?

Literature Review

Introduction

The reason for conducting this case study was to explore the instructional strategies teachers are using with students in poverty. The main theoretical focus underpinning this study was constructivism. The theories of Vygotsky, Piaget, and Bruner were the basis for the conceptual framework, and I will explain their connection to this study.

I will also discuss current research related to many subtopics based on poverty and academic success in this review. I critically reviewed primary and peer-reviewed articles and summarized them to gain thoughtful insights of the effects of poverty on academic success and the strategies teachers can use to improve students' learning. In the review, I will report the relationship between poverty and socioeconomic factors with assessment scores on standardized tests. The literature review will also include research on teachers' perceptions and strategies to improve students' performance.

Many resources were used to search for literature, including Google scholar, the Internet, Walden library, EBSCO, and local libraries. These resources were searched two to five times per week. A maximum of 700 articles and documents were searched and 276 were used to obtain relevant literature for the study. Some were outdated; however, these sources contained relevant information, especially relevant to the conceptual

framework, and were included. I then limited my timeframe to search only for articles from 2015 to 2019. The following key terms were used: *academic achievement and poverty*, *instructional strategies and poverty*, *poverty and education*, *socioeconomic status and academic performance*, *effective instructional strategies and poverty*, and *poverty and assessment scores*. In the section that follows, I will discuss the conceptual framework that informed the study.

Conceptual Framework

Brooks and Brooks (1999) defined constructivism as an educational theory which explores the procedures that are intricate to the way students develop in their different learning stages. According to Royer (2007), the theory of constructivism was an aspect of the cognitive revolution of the 1950s. Social cognitive theory and constructivist theory are related (Royer, 2007). According to Bruner (1975), the constructivist learning theory allows students to think outside the box, think critically, and draw inferences in adjusting to information that is presented. Students are also able to draw on prior knowledge to gain meaning from new information presented to them (Bruner, 1975). Hence, the constructivist view stated that for effective learning to take place, students must be actively engaged in drawing from previous learning experiences and actively connecting with them (Fosnot, 1996; Yager & Lutz, 1994). Heinze (2011) stated that students are actively engaged in the construction of knowledge at the social level individually.

The key concepts of Piaget's, Vygotsky's, and Dewey's theories that support and align with the constructivist framework are that transformation in learning and development are tied to communicative interactions with others. In using Vygotsky's

(1978) theory, teachers will be able to draw on strategies to be included in their lesson plans to better teach their students. Piaget's (1955) theory explains how students learn. Piaget's theory allows teachers to describe instruction for students' learning and design strategies. Teachers must be aware of how students learn to teach them effectively. The main areas studied in my research were the instructional strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty and addressing low student achievement and constructivism. When teachers adopt the constructivist approach in planning lessons, children learn best because they are active and seek solutions for themselves (Blake & Pope, 2008).

Vygotsky (1997) and Piaget (1955) also agreed based on their theories that cognition in learning and sociocultural factors of students in poverty impede students' learning and development. Vygotsky also posited that learning proceeds from the concrete to the abstract. Hence, students in poverty have to be scaffolded into learning from early for their learning to be effective (Vygotsky, 1978). Constructivist methodologies and learning cycles are some strategies used to teach students in science classes in South Carolina schools (Coghlan et al., 2010; National Science Teachers Association, 2010).

The concretization of the constructivist belief is embedded by certain beliefs that (a) for learning to take place, students must be fully engaged in the process; (b) creation of requisite knowledge is necessary; (c) for gaining new knowledge, children need to formulate ideas, not discover; (d) personal interaction is made through learning; (e) peer association results in learning; (f) when problems are solved based on difficulty, this results in improved learning; and (g) finding meaning in the world is a result of students'

learning (Li, Cheng, & Liu, 2013; von Glasersfeld, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978, 1997). Many researchers have stated that constructivist learning theory is grounded in the beliefs that for persons to be able to solve problems, they must be able to collaborate together (Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell, 2006; Van de Walle, 2004).

Using the constructivist approach, teachers will be able to align teaching strategies with students' cognitive level. The goal is to help the students construct knowledge (Blake & Pope, 2008). This theory can be used to assist in forming relationships between how students learn and the strategies that teachers use to teach them (Li et al., 2013). Therefore, the constructivist theory emphasizes the relationship among instructional strategies, how teachers teach, and presents ways that teachers can improve strategies they are using in their classrooms to improve students' learning (Blake & Pope, 2008).

Review of the Broader Problem

Many research studies on cognitive development are aligned with Piaget's (1955) and Vygotsky's (1997) theories, and the concepts of the theories remain consistent (Flores & Ferreira, 2016; Gamble-Hilton, 2012; Griffiths, Sohlberg, Kirk, Fickas, & Biancarosa, 2016; Keating, 2009; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2017; Pogrow, 2009). The conceptual framework was used to guide the organization of the literature review in that I searched for current studies that explicitly focused on instructional strategies and some factors that contribute to low achievement among students in poverty. I also searched for studies where researchers looked more in-depth into the instructional strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty. I included qualitative

studies, especially case studies where researchers investigated the use of instructional strategies used to teach studies in poverty. First, I look at how poverty affects education; then, I look further at the effects of poverty on nutrition, school readiness, and attendance. From there, I delve further into teachers' perceptions and the educational challenges faced by low SES students to obtain a better understanding of what researchers have found about the effects on students in poverty. Finally, I delve further into effective instructional strategies and their effects on students' learning to seek answers for my research questions.

Poverty and Education

Poverty affects education and student achievement. Poverty has a lasting effect on students' education (Taylor, 2017). For this reason, Flores and Ferreira (2016) demonstrated that poverty directly influences students' achievement. Underachievement is also a factor affecting students in poverty that leads to low literacy results (UNICEF, 2018). UNICEF (2018) highlighted that even though children in Jamaica, where the study was carried out, have access to publicly-funded education, poverty causes less participation, low or no progress in literacy, devastating underperformance, and in many instances, students do not complete their education, resulting in dropout. Poverty is a deterrent to students in Jamaica to access tertiary education (Borne, 2016). Other research has shown that students in impoverished families are more likely to experience a limited number of texts and genres and hence will develop literacy problems (Miller, 2011, 2016). Likewise, children raised in impoverished homes often suffer from low academic performance (Miller, 2016) and do not perform well in school because the conditions

they are faced with daily may have trained their brains to accept failure (Yelowitz, 2017). Flores and Ferreira (2016) further stated that low achievement is closely correlated with lack of resources. They also stated that empirical work has shown a direct correlation between low SES and low achievement (Flores & Ferreira, 2016). There are unequal nuances of learning weaknesses from high poverty that contribute to less achievement, lower graduation rates, and unavoidably, less future chances for career and college for underprivileged students (Ullucci & Howard, 2015). Thus, prior researchers have revealed that low SES can result in low achievement.

Poverty also affects assessment scores. Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith (2017) concluded that children who live in high poverty areas experience lower assessment scores than those not living in high poverty areas. Olszewski-Kubilius and Corwith further stated that students in high-poverty urban schools are not able to perform as effectively as those not living in poverty. In another study, Ellis and Sosu (2014) concluded that there is a persistent achievement gap between children from the poorest families when compared to children from the richest families in the early years. Therefore, children from poor households will be plagued with low attainment, which affects them from childhood through adulthood due to the persistent achievement gap in their assessment scores (Ellis & Sosu, 2014). As expressed by researchers, poverty and its factors affect students' assessment scores.

Poverty can affect the behavior of impoverished students and how they are treated by their peers. In deep rural areas and inner-city areas in Jamaica, children live in dire poverty and are exposed to violence, resulting in behaviors that are not acceptable; this

further leads to low literacy academic performance (Roofe, 2018; UNICEF, 2018). Many impoverished children are ridiculed daily; hence, they display negative behavior that is not displayed by children who do not face ridicule (Morrissey, Oellerich, Meade, Simms, & Stock, 2016). Harbert (2017) added that when impoverished children were paired with children outside of poverty, negative attitudes and blame were revealed. These negative attitudes of students in poverty led to them being ridiculed.

Socioeconomic Factors and Poverty

The SES of children affects them in many ways and is a consistent and reliable predictor of a vast array of outcomes, such as education, family achievement, academic achievement, career aspirations, and psychological health (Bergen, Zuijen, Bishop, & Jong, 2016; Brown, Wohn, & Ellison, 2016; Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013; Doerschuk et al., 2016; Houle, 2014; McLaughlin & Sheridan, 2016; Reardon, Valentino, Kalogrides, Shores, & Greenberg, 2013). Thus, Thompson (2018) concluded that SES is an indicator of students' achievement in Australia. Thompson further stated that parental education, occupation, and income levels along with parents' perceptions of their children are factors that prevent achievement of students in low-SES levels. Students from low-SES homes are at a disadvantage in school because they lack an academic home environment that will influence their success in school (Thompson, 2018). Thompson also highlighted the Programme for International Student Assessment scores of students from low-SES levels and found that these students performed 3 years lower than those not from low-SES levels. In another study, conducted in West Cape Province of South Africa, Byat, Louw, and Rena (2017) discussed the socioeconomic

factors that contribute to the underperformance of secondary school learners. Byat et al. concluded that there is a direct relationship between the socioeconomic factors of learners and underperformance. As expressed by researchers, students' SES can contribute to underperformance.

When compared to their well-off peers, students from low-SES families are often left alone while their parents work long hours which leads to them spending less time playing outdoors or participating in afterschool activities (Osonwa, Adejobi, Iyam, & Osonwa, 2013). Because low SES children play less, they do not socialize well with their peers (Kusaeri, Aditomo, Ridho, & Fuad, 2018). As a result, these students may fail to form positive relationships with peers (Osonwa et al., 2013). The socialization of children directly affects how prepared they are for school (Ali, Constantino, Azhar, & Akhtar, 2018). Play is important for younger children to help them build positive relationships, improved attention span and improvement in their achievement and social skills (Ali et al., 2018). The use of play-based learning is important for children as it allows them to strive to achieve their goals in a challenging manner (Garvis & Pendergast, 2015). Hence, learning through play is useful in helping children improve in their academic achievement but is sometimes lacking in the home environments of students in low-SES families.

Other researchers cited that other factors than SES can boost academic success among students (Doerschuk et al., 2016; McLaughlin & Sheridan, 2016; Osonwa et al., 2013; Pogrow, 2009). For example, programs, school reforms, and national partnership agreements greatly affected the performance of students from low SES in South Whales

(Huo & Lamb, 2015). Huo and Lamb (2015) reported that positive results of students from low SES was a result of parents' positive participation (Huo & Lamb, 2015). Additionally, investing heavily into education can result in economic growth and development and poverty reduction as poverty acts as a factor preventing people from access to education (Geronimus et al., 2015; Mbulawa & Mehta, 2016). Economic growth leads to quality in access to education (Mbulawa & Mehta, 2016). The findings revealed that when family income was boosted, academic performance, reading, and math scores increase (Hoxworth, 2018).

Nutrition and Poverty

Proper nutrition and school readiness are concerns that affect students in poverty. Rahmawati and Daerobi (2019) found that nutrition affects students' success, concluded that nutrition in early years is important for a child's total development, and cited the connection between nutrition and learning. If children are malnourished or hungry, they cannot learn, and this often leads to behavioral problems (Rahmawati & Daerobi, 2019). Malnutrition results in underdevelopment of the brain (Luby et al., 2014). Malnutrition also leads to antisocial behaviors, lack of early stimulation, and a defect in the development of emergent literacy behaviors and delayed development of students' fine motor skills (Luby et al., 2014). Malnutrition resulting from poor diet causes deficiencies of needed vitamins in the body, and this causes long term neurological defects (Armstrong, 2010; Yousafzai et al., 2016). Because students' brains are not developed, they are not able to learn as effectively as other students. Armstrong (2010) and Yousafzai et al. (2016) also stated that related diseases such as asthma and poisoning

caused from nutrient deficiency are common among children in poverty, which can negatively affect the functioning of the brain and interfere with learning. In concluding evidence from research shows that malnourished children learn at a slower pace or do not learn as well as others who are not malnourished.

School Readiness and Poverty

Early childhood years are the most critical period in which environmental stressors such as poverty and chaos are harmful to children's early and later academic achievement (Hoxworth, 2018). Impoverished children lack early stimulation and exposure due to their parents' financial status or position (Kusaeri et al., 2018). Children who have less exposure to early reading materials will perform lower in literacy assessments than other children who are exposed early to reading materials (Brady, 2016; Sharples, Slavin, & Chambers, 2011). To address the low academic performance of students in poverty as it relates to literacy and students' overall performance there needs to be early exposure to educational opportunities (Geronimus et al., 2015; Julius & Bawane, 2011; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Olszewski-Kubilius & Corwith, 2017).

Children's ability to succeed is dependent on how ready they are at the start of school. As expressed by Kusaeri et al. (2018), a child's readiness for school is replicated in the child's ability to be able to succeed socially and academically in the teaching and learning environment. Additionally, for children living in poverty to be appropriately ready for school children should be exposed to positive experiences (Kusaeri et al., 2018). Next, children in poverty also need proper cognitive development, and the development of their fine motor skills and emotional health. Moreover, children's home

language presents a barrier as they lack the language experience because of deprivation due to poverty from a younger age. It is imperative that children's physical well-being, competence, and language skills are properly developed. A positive approach to learning is also necessary (Kusaeri et al., 2018). There is overwhelming indication to show that impoverished children are at risk of improper orientation to school and learning as other children their own age. Many issues exist with children in poverty, such as ill-health, disruptive home life, and irregular school attendance, which prevent normal development (Morrissey et al., 2016). Thus, children in poverty cannot be appropriately ready for school due to many factors which result in negative outcomes and limited school readiness.

Poor School Attendance

Poor school attendance negatively affects students' academic performance especially in the early years (Attendance Works, 2014). Moreover, regular school attendance positively affects students' academic performance and lack of regular attendance is a detriment to academic performance (Dobson, 2010; Morrison, 2018; Park & Kerr, 2009; Simpson, 2016). There are many social factors that result in poor attendance, such as poverty, hunger, and poor health (Chunnu, 2016). Poor school attendance affects students' literacy performance. Fernandez and Abocejo (2014) conducted a study in the Philippines and found the following factors relating to poverty and poor attendance: (a) poverty pushes children to participate in the labor force resulting in poor attendance or nonattendance at school; (b) poverty incidence and early child labor were highly correlated with low-academic performance and school nonattendance; and

(c) the lack of personal interest, high cost of education, and employment lead to students' poor attendance. Thus, many factors contribute to poor school attendance.

According to Jennings and Cook (2015), limited research has been done on absenteeism in the Caribbean in comparison to developed countries. In the Jamaican context, poor school attendance has been found to be related to parental, student, community, and school factors (Chunnu, 2016; Cook & Ezenne, 2010; Jennings & Cook, 2015). Cook and Ezenne (2010) conducted an earlier study about factors influencing absenteeism for primary school students from the perspectives of school educators and parents in 71 Jamaican schools and students from 10 of those schools using focus groups and interviews. From the adult perspectives, Cooke and Ezenne identified 10 causes of absenteeism from Jamaican schools. These factors were: (a) financial constraints, (b) little to no value placed on education, (c) the belief that students did not need to go to school on Fridays, (d) child labor needed on Thursdays and Fridays, (e) weather conditions, (f) lack of parental control, (g) chronic sickness, (h) students needing to stay home to take care of siblings, (i) student discipline problems, and (j) severe water problems (Cook & Ezenne, 2010). The student data showed similar findings. Thus, the causes of absenteeism were not just parent related but student, community, and school factors (Cook & Ezenne, 2010).

In later research by Jennings and Cook (2015), 221 parents and adult relatives across nine secondary schools within the rural areas of Jamaica were interviewed about the causes of absenteeism. Although Jennings and Cook's focus was on the secondary level and my research is on the primary level, there were similar findings to Cook and

Ezenne's (2010) research on primary schools in Jamaica. Students were often absent from school for many reasons, such as staying with siblings, needing to work, parents' unwillingness to send children to school due to little value place on education, as well as, lack of transportation, no lunch money, lack of necessary resources, and also factors within the school (Jennings & Cook, 2015). Students who are frequently absence from school can fall behind their peers in academic performance (Baxter & Meyers, 2016; Jennings & Cook, 2015). As expressed by many researchers frequent absent from school greatly influence students' leaning and achievement.

Teachers, Low SES Students, and Academic Achievement

Teachers are important in students' academic success. First, teachers play important roles in successful student performance (Isenberg et al., 2016; Sivri & Balci, 2015; Stough, Montague, & Landmark, & Williams-Diehm, 2015). Isenberg et al. (2016) concluded that teachers have significant effects on students' test performance, educational attainment, and noncognitive outcomes, as well as long-term effects on later life outcomes such as employment probabilities and labor market earnings. In another study it was concluded that teachers' classroom management skills and training can be barriers to student learning and effective instruction (Stough et al., 2015). A teacher's lack of confidence in classroom management skills can affect student success (Sivri & Balci, 2015), because a teacher who lacks classroom management skills can have difficulty influencing learning and providing differentiated instruction (Akalin & Sucuoglu, 2015). Poor classroom management has a significant effect on students' learning and students' motivation to learn (Arens, Morin, & Watermann, 2015). For

classroom management to be effective it must positively influence students learning (Skiba, Ormiston, Martinez, & Cummings, 2016).

Student-teacher relationships are important to the academic success of students. Kieffer (2013) conducted a qualitative study involving students from high poverty areas in which he used student-teacher relationships to assist in helping them to learn science skills. The findings revealed that creating consistent classrooms assist students in poverty to improve their performance. The researcher revealed that when teachers understand students in poverty, they are better able to structure instructional strategies to suit the needs of the learners. Also, relationships were deemed as important for assisting teachers to frame effective instructional strategies (Kieffer, 2013). Even though Kieffer's research was about science education it is still relevant to the teaching of literacy instruction because when teachers integrate students learning needs regardless of the subject with what is consistent in their classrooms the achievement of students in poverty will improve. Additionally, when teachers use regular assessment and learning to learn strategies to teach students in poverty, they are better able to connect with them (Laguador, 2014). In conclusion it is important for teachers to understand and know the learning needs of students to properly prepare for their learning needs.

Evidence from international research found that strategic classroom interventions that are geared towards the learning needs of students in poverty have a profound effect on teaching methods and instructional approaches. The National Foundation for Educational Research (2013) cited specific conditions (e.g., game-based learning, content specific tasks, motivation through video games) are necessary in providing effective

support that will raise student achievement and make learning enjoyable for students in poverty. Some of the strategies that are necessary are those that provide improvement for the health safety and economic stability of children.

Some teachers are not effectively trained to teach students in poverty (Rossitler, 2013). Miller (2016) posited that a wide gap in teacher knowledge of writing strategies exists, due to the lack of self-monitoring and effective writing instructional strategies on the part of teachers. According to Graham and Harris (2016), effective teaching of writing in research is at its formative years and the effective use of instructional approaches to teach writing to students in poverty are only most effective when teachers are able to amplify approaches. Overall teachers ought to be cognizant of the most effective instructional strategies to teacher's individual students for success.

Effective Strategies for Teaching Students in Poverty

Effective strategies are important for teaching students in poverty. Abrams, Flenner, Frazier, and Mckinney (2013) highlighted the need for more effective instructional methods in meeting the needs of high-risk students in poverty. Specific strategies used to teach students in poverty assist in developing all the faculties of learners and assist them to become intellectually capable of mastering academic and cognitive tasks (Taylor, 2017). The quality or quantity of instruction given to students in poverty is also important as this can lead to further reduction in the benefits of education when compared to those outside of poverty (Jesson & Limbrick, 2014; Lam, 2014). Therefore, students' SES factors should be considered before planning programs for literacy instruction (Lam, 2014). In a qualitative study, Moodie-Reid (2016) found that

the use of basic literacy strategies within the formative years will assist students in developing early literacy skills. Moodie Reid further concluded that many students are not able to express themselves well in reading and writing and hence, the need to pay special attention to each student as they have different learning styles. Lam and McMaster (2014) concluded that for literacy teaching to be effective students must be placed in an atmosphere which is conducive to learning. Therefore, for instructional strategies to be effective they should be of good quality and teachers must be aware of students learning styles to adequately prepare teaching instruction.

Furthermore, Garcia-Carrion, Gomez, Molina, and Ionescu (2017) found a reduction in students' low literacy scores as a result of the strategies used. Garcia-Carrion et al. highlighted the increase in students' language arts and mathematics test scores in students' achievement in Europe and South America. Teachers used diverse instructional strategies such as student-centered enquiry, enquiry-based learning, and viewing of students' prior knowledge to teach students in high poverty urban areas and were shown to be successful (Garcia-Carrion et al., 2017). The results gained were as a result of various PD workshops within the schools. Garcia and Weiss (2019) concluded that PD is important to assist teachers who teach students in poverty. Other strategies that researchers have found to be effective in teaching students in poverty include, cooperative learning, culturally relevant instruction, differentiated instruction, and the use of prior knowledge, which I will discuss in the following sections.

Cooperative learning. Laguador (2014) concluded that cooperative learning is effective in teaching students in poverty due to collaboration of students with their peers;

in cooperative learning they learn management skills which are a necessity for academic performance. Strategies that involve one to one teaching, coaching teachers, and cooperative teaching, assist students living in poverty. Cooperative learning is connected to effective literacy instruction (Laguador, 2014; Le, Janssen, & Wubbels, 2018). Also, language and communication necessitate cooperation and hence cooperative learning strategies are effective for teaching students in poverty to develop these skills (Clark, 2018).

The use of cooperative learning strategies for mixed ability grouping is effective to improve students learning needs (Taylor, 2017). Taylor (2017) conducted a qualitative study including African American students living in poverty and found that cooperative learning strategies work best with children from low-SES backgrounds and students' academic performance was improved when placed in cooperative groups. Taylor also stated that cooperative learning instructional strategies are geared to teach students the following values: character building, honesty, responsibility, respect, cooperation, sympathy to others. Finnegan and Mazin (2016) found cooperative learning strategies, as well as cueing and questioning to be effective for teaching literacy instruction.

Culturally responsive instruction. Culturally responsive instruction such as all-inclusive, culturally unrestrained and proficiency building strategies close the gap in academic performance of children in poverty (Taylor, 2017). Culturally responsive best practices used by teachers successfully meet the needs of students in poverty (Means, 2017). Experts agree positive teacher-student relationships develop when instruction is culturally responsive and engaging (Williams, 2014). Furthermore, researchers argued

that teaching using culturally responsive strategies affects student motivation, behavioral issues, and improves literacy achievement (Ford, Stuart, & Vakil, 2014; Garcia & Chun, 2016). When teachers select and effectively use learning resources from students' cultures, which includes books from multicultural resources in reading and language student academic achievement improves (Eva & Walker, 2016; Frey & Fisher, 2010; Griffiths et al., 2016; Hodgkinson, Land, Johnson, & Beshchorner, 2016).

Furthermore, when teachers integrate students' culture and accommodate their home language students in teaching strategies this helps to build their vocabulary (López, Thompson, & Walker-Dalhouse, 2011; Risko & Walker-Dalhouse, 2015; Taylor, 2017; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2013; Walker-Dalhouse & Dalhouse, 2015; Walker-Dalhouse & Risko, 2012; Watts-Taffe et al., 2012). A curriculum well designed to cater to ethnicity is a successful strategy in improving socialization skills of students in poverty and for improving their academic performance (Harven & Soodjinda, 2016; Sleeter, 2011; Wyatt, 2016). This well-designed curriculum will assist students from different ethnicities to improve their academic achievement as it will be familiar in catering to their needs. Overall, research has shown that diverse low SES students are more likely to succeed academically if the climate of the classroom and school is warm and welcoming, and students feel that their culture is valued (Baldwin, 2015).

Differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is effective for students in poverty (Maeng & Bell, 2015). According to Tomlinson (2014) differentiated instruction is useful for teaching literacy to students regularly in their classrooms. Firstly, differentiated instruction will allow students to investigate topics of interest, develop their

research skills, and receive instruction on inquiry skills (Tomlinson, 2014). Secondly, Valiandes (2015) found that students progressed better in classrooms where differentiated instruction methods were used in teaching and learning in comparison to those in which differentiation was not used. Also, the quality of differentiated teaching given by teachers has a great effect on student achievement especially in mixed-ability classrooms (Aranda & Zamora, 2016). Dosch and Zidon (2014) and Maeng and Bell (2015) highlighted that the use of differentiated instruction with students was more beneficial than use of non-differentiated instruction on students test scores. Finally, differentiated instruction positively influenced students' performance in poverty-stricken areas (Brezicha, Bergmark, & Mitra, 2015).

Muthomi and Mbugua (2014) stated that differentiated instruction contributes to students learning and found that when class time is used to tailor instruction to students in a more effective way while teacher-made instructions are presented using the computer, literacy achievement of students in poverty improves. Classroom practices will be more effective when teachers and staff members are aware of the SES difficulties faced by students; teachers will be better able to plan differentiated instruction to better meet the needs of students (Garcia-Carrion et al., 2017). Hence, Flexible ability groupings in differentiated instruction focusing on student engagement and improved learning outcomes with high standards of curriculum are proven effective instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty (Akdeniz, 2016; Beard, 2016).

The learning cycle approach (Meyer, 2017) and cognitive teaching styles (Yagcioglu, 2016) are useful differentiated instructional strategies for teaching students

in poverty. Meyer (2017) stated that the learning cycle approach is effective for teaching students in poverty especially when exploration precedes the introduction of concepts and terms. The learning cycle approach engages students in collaborative enquiry and enhances students learning which can lead to improvement in test scores (Meyer, 2017). Moreover, cognitive learning styles assist students in processing concepts, skills and content in solving more complex problems and help students develop cognitive strategies (Yagcioglu, 2016). Students can think outside the box and be able to perceive the information to better solve complex problems. Therefore, these cognitive strategies assist students in processing information (Flores & Ferreira, 2016) and are effective in teaching students in poverty as they allow students to become more efficient in reading a variety of texts (Yagcioglu, 2016). Additionally, Miller reported that cognitive development strategies when implemented through PD were effective strategies for teaching students in poverty in building their literacy skills and improving academic performance overall.

Prior knowledge. Using student's prior knowledge is important for teaching students in poverty. Firstly, engaging students in what they already know and consistently challenging them is an effective strategy for teaching students in poverty (Heinze, 2011). Secondly, Bailey (2019) found that prior knowledge was effective for teaching students comprehension skills and was effective for teaching students in poverty. Also, prior knowledge is important for students to relate written words to their previous experience to learn new words. Bailey concluded that activating prior knowledge is extremely important for teaching literacy to students. Hence the use of prior knowledge is imperative for teaching students in poverty.

Other approaches. Other approaches are necessary for teaching students in poverty literacy instruction. First, Roskos and Neuman (2014) concluded that guided reading instruction, fluency, decoding, and phonemic strategies are effective for improving literacy instruction for students in poverty. Roskos and Neuman further stated that an effective literacy plan should include awareness and attention to teaching fluency, decoding, and vocabulary development to individual students. Secondly, direct attention given to students by teachers in improving phonemic awareness and vocabulary development leads to improvement in literacy (Roskos & Neuman, 2014). Next, Naraian (2016) remarked that ensuring success in the literacy environment for students' instruction of prior skills based on schema is important for teaching students in poverty. The use of these strategies allows teachers to directly connect with each child and adjust the learning session to what works best for each child (Butrymowicz, 2012; Day, 2015; Dombey et al., 2016; Jensen, 2014; Sharples et al., 2011; Taylor, 2017).

Next, the use of explicit instruction and systematic models, scaffolding and feedback are effective strategies of teaching students in poverty (Wan, 2016). The use of systematic instruction allows for instruction to be broken down into manageable parts for all students (Wan, 2016). Meyer (2017) noted that direct and explicit instructional strategies assist in students' achievement, when students are exposed to direct instruction their achievement on test scores greatly improves. To address the instructional needs of students in poverty Meyer stated that hands-on, minds-on activities, constructivist methodologies, and learning cycles enhance student learning. Further, planned interventions were shown to be effective in classroom with students in poverty

(Laguador, 2014). Brown (2016) and Cooper (2017) also found that interventions that provided remediation for poor students narrowed the gap in achievement for these students.

Interventions that adopt a holistic approach which deals with obstacles that affect children in poverty and negative influences are most effective for teaching students in poverty (Lu, Black, & Richter, 2016). However, the most effective strategy was the whole family approach which involves both children and parents learning and working together in inclusive settings (Lu et al., 2016). The 5H (head, heart, health, hands and home) holistic framework was effective for teaching student in poverty in that educators used this approach to effectively meet the needs of students. Finally, Rose (2016) concluded that the 5H framework was effective for the holistic development of many children in poverty for different contexts. Rose also reiterated that it is an ever-changing process which includes many activities happening at the same time in different context. The use of this 5H framework is especially effective for teaching students in poverty because it takes into consideration student's individual needs (Rea & Zinskie, 2017).

Authentic instructional practices are also needed in the classroom to facilitate student success and the success of teachers (Elfers & Stritikus, 2014). Authentic learning provides students with the opportunity to take the lead in engaging in learning independently (Lexia Learning Systems Blog, 2018). The authentic learning classroom provides students with the opportunity to brainstorm and solve problems independently.

Sulik, Blair Mills-Koonce, Berry, Greenberg, and Family Life Project Investigators (2015) offered an alternative instructional strategy to the traditional

remediation and test preparation teachers typically use when students are not making progress academically. Students can improve their sense of understanding in content areas by practicing higher-order thinking skills through intensive small groups or Socratic conversation; this involves critical thinking informed discussion with real-time questions and answers (Sulik et al., 2015). Socratic conversation is a dialogue which involves critically defending a point using concrete evidence so as not to contradict oneself (Sulik et al., 2015). Sulik et al. stated that these Socratic conversations should be carefully planned by the teacher, should last for a minimum of 35 minutes daily and should link concepts to students' worldview instead of the worldview of adults. Sulik et al. stated that students in poverty have not mastered the initial thinking development stage because the brain can only retain new information if related information preexists in the brain for connection to be made with old and new content.

Researchers have indicated that lack of exposure to different teaching strategies prevents literacy promoting experiences (Sulik et al., 2015). Kehrer (2016) indicated that policymakers and other agencies should follow effective strategies that can be used to lessen the effects of poverty and how it affects learning. Kehrer further stated that there is a hostile effect, in that students in poverty perform woefully inadequate on educational achievements for children who are not so privileged. There must be serious determination to decrease the achievement gap and an essential component to increase student attainment (Meissel, Parr, & Timperley, 2016; You, Dang, & Lim, 2016). Therefore, the goal for conducting this case study was to identify the instructional strategies that teachers at Hill Elementary are using with students in poverty. I wanted to identify the

strategies that teachers are using as a starting point to determine what changes may need to be made and what additional assistance they may need. The research reviewed allowed me to advance my knowledge on the academic performance of students in poverty and effective instructional strategies needed to teach them to allow them to perform more effectively (Bower & Griffin, 2011; Brezicha et al., 2015; Dosch & Zidon, 2014; Maeng & Bell, 2015; Pogrow, 2009; Valiandes, 2015; Vera, 2011; Yonezawa, Jones, & Robb Singer, 2011).

The current study focused on the strategies to teach students. Specifically, in this study I explored the instructional practices that teachers are currently using at Hill Elementary and what these teachers believe is necessary for success in teaching students living in poverty.

Conclusion

The findings in the research discussed in this literature review indicate that poverty affects students' academic achievement and literacy scores (Geronimus et al., 2015; Taylor, 2017). Researchers all concluded that students in high poverty urban areas are not able to perform effectively. This was due to the fact that children born into poverty require different teaching and learning strategies than their middle and upper-class peers (Garrett-Peters, Mokrova, Vernon-Feagans, Willoughby, & Pan, 2016).

This review presented findings of literature on effective instructional strategies that can be used to address this problem. Sharples et al. (2011) and Maeng and Bell (2015) stated different methods that teachers use for teaching students in poverty, some strategies are coaching, one on one and cooperative teaching (Griffiths et al., 2016). Sato

and Lensmire (2009) emphasized behaviors that students in poverty possess that hinder their learning. Butrymowicz (2012) and Meyer (2017) indicated that teachers who make learning effective get better results in their classroom. Effective instruction is important to measure what skills students in poverty produce that are efficient and conceptual understanding of students living in poverty. Students are effective at producing the skills that are necessary for academic success when there is a match between what teachers are teaching and how students learn (Sato & Lensmire, 2009; Sharples et al., 2011).

Based on research conducted there are many clarifications on the effects of poverty and its impact on students' academic performance for students in my school district. Several factors based on research that lead to poverty and the most prevalent being parents' financial status. Regular attendance has a positive effect on the performance of the students. Low achievement is closely related to lack of resources and lack of resources is the definition of poverty. Parents and children who live in poverty have a greater chance of going hungry, losing their homes, and becoming sick. They may possess mental and physical disabilities, and experience violent teen parenting, educational failure, and family stress. This research connects to the study's focus in that teachers having knowledge of students' background are better able to plan effective instructional strategies to meet their needs. The study's focus is on improving the performance of students' in poverty, therefore I explored strategies in the literature that teachers are using and have used to improve performance. Hence the purpose of the study therefore was to explore the instructional strategies teachers use to teach students in

poverty and learn what resources and support they believe are necessary for helping their students.

Implications

The teachers at Hill elementary are experts in their own field. There are two projects that could be developed as a result of the study findings. One project is to provide a curriculum consisting of best practices found in the literature and found to be effective at other schools teaching students in poverty. Teachers placed in institutions with students from high poverty areas should be equipped with the skills and strategies to teach them. Forlin (2010) and Public Impact (2018) stated that teachers who are placed in learning environments with students from high poverty areas to teach should be properly equipped to teach the students. It is imperative then that teachers are properly trained and equipped with instructional strategies to meet the needs of these learners to improve their academic performance and enable them to compete their other students.

Another project that I could put in place is a PD workshop for teachers to equip them to be better able to provide the resources that students in poverty may be lacking based on prior research and the findings of the study. A PD workshop could be used to improve teacher quality as this will serve as an investment in better trained teachers to teach students in poverty. PD activities that are innovative will be done as this will allow teachers to learn in new ways which will in turn have a positive effect on student achievement. PD activities related to instructional strategies suitable for teaching these students might have a positive influence on achievement. Cultural competency training, if deemed important via the findings, can also be taught through PD and this can be

introduced into teacher training programs to allow teachers to be more competent to teach the students in poverty. The project will be discussed in Section 3 and appear in Appendix A.

Summary

In Section 1 of this case study, I provided background information about the school being studied, students in poverty and effective strategies that can be used to teach them. I discussed the efforts of teachers in using a wide variety of strategies to assist students living in poverty in meeting their needs. Another aspect that was discussed in the literature review was that of incapacitating factors that prevent improvement in student success. Since poverty has proven to be a major cause of below average performance at school it is evident through research that when teachers plan differentiated instruction that caters to different learning needs and diversities students' performance drastically increases. Also, when leadership engages teachers in PD using best practices to teach students in poverty the students' proficiency rates gradually improves (Ahn, 2011; Butrymowicz, 2012; Garcia & Weiss, 2019; Mervis, 2011; Murphy, 2010; Piaget, 1955; Vygotsky, 1997).

In this section, I also identified the purpose of the study and the research questions answered. The rationale for the study and tentative implications were also included. The conceptual framework, which informs the study along with current peer reviewed scholarly literature on the topic, was also discussed in this section. Section 2 contains the design of the study and the approach that was used in carrying out the study.

I also discussed the design, methodology, instruments, sampling procedure, how the data were collected and analyzed, and the data analysis results in Section 2.

Section 2: The Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to explore the strategies teachers are using to teach children living in poverty and learn what resources and support they need to teach these students. In this study, I also sought to determine the teachers' beliefs about strategies that are suitable for teaching these students in poverty in assisting to improve their performance. This case study is relevant to gain an in-depth understanding of the strategies that teachers are using and believe are effective for teaching students in poverty. Therefore, in addressing factors that can lead to improvement in achievement, I also sought to assist teachers in asking for what they need in terms of PD to assist these children. In Section 2, I will discuss the design and approach of the study. I discuss how participants were selected and the population and sample size. In this section, the consent from participants is discussed as well as the ethical considerations based on the Institution Review Board (IRB) and Walden University Research Center.

Research Design and Approach

The study design was a qualitative case study. All data were obtained from face-to-face interviews and a review of documents. This section will include the discussion for the research design, sampling procedures, participants, and how data were analyzed. An instrumental case study was used to conduct this research. According to Merriam (2009), an instrumental “case study is one in which the major data gathering technique is participant observation (supplemented with formal and informal interviews and review of documents), and the focus of the study is on a particular organization” (p. 48). Instrumental case study is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to

withdraw a generalization (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). In instrumental case study, the case is viewed in detail, its context dissected, and its normal activity reported because it aids the investigator to track the peripheral interest (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009). Because I focused on a specific group of teachers in a school setting, an instrumental case study design was deemed appropriate for the study. Bogdan and Biklen (2010) concluded that if the study is focused on a particular organization, then the suitable method is an instrumental case study. A case study answers how and why questions. In a case study, the researcher seeks to discover important contextual conditions of the case or phenomenon to be studied (Merriam, 2009). The case study method allows the researcher to dig deeper into the situation in which he or she plans to study. Case study also allows the researcher to get a better understanding of existing capacities and dynamics (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006). Case study was the most logical choice of methodology because it allowed me to explore effective instructional strategies used for teaching students in poverty using qualitative data collection methods. In qualitative research, the researcher tries to develop a multifaceted depiction of the problem. In doing this, I was able to report many viewpoints and recognize many reasons involved in the problem being studied, finally sketching a larger picture that emerged (see Creswell, 2012, 2014).

There were other qualitative designs that I did not choose to for this study. Two designs that were not chosen were grounded theory and phenomenology. Phenomenology was not suitable to conduct this study as, according to Creswell (2012, 2014) and Merriam (2009), phenomenology is used by researchers to discover the meaning of an event from the people who first experience the event. This qualitative case study was

completed to explore effective instructional strategies that could be used to teach students in poverty. The information was gathered from the teachers in the educational setting (Hill Elementary School). The phenomenological approach in research could be otherwise used to explore what it is like to effectively teach students in poverty to raise their academic achievement levels. The result then would not directly relate to the problem of underachievement of students in poverty and effective instructional strategies to teach them.

I did not choose to use grounded theory as the goal of grounded theory designs is, as the name suggests, gathering sufficient data about an event or experience to generate a theory (see Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam, 2009). I did not choose a correlational design because I was not interested in doing a statistical test to determine a pattern or relationships among variables (see Creswell, 2012, 2014). I choose instead to explore effective instructional strategies that can be used to teach students in poverty.

Another design I did not choose was survey design as I was not seeking information from a large population. Instead, I wanted to explore in detail the use of effective instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty, and a survey design would not match this study. Survey designs are used to seek information from a population or a sample of a population on students' attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics (Creswell, 2012, 2014). Experimental designs are used to establish possible cause and effect (Creswell, 2012, 2014). In this research, I explored a phenomenon in a natural setting. Therefore, an experimental design was not be suitable for this study.

The qualitative research design was chosen for this study because I wanted to use other methods apart from quantitative design to collect data for this study. Using a case study, I was able to document observations of lessons, record interviews, and review documents.

Participants

The total population at Hill Elementary consisted of 10 teachers in 2015 to 2016. The sample was four teachers from Grades 2 to 6. Using a smaller population in case study research, I able to engage in deeper inquiry to obtain more detail from each participant about the instructional strategies that are being used and the research questions to be answered. A purposeful sampling method was used because it allowed me to choose participants based on individual characteristics, availability, and contribution to the research (see Creswell, 2012, 2014; Merriam, 2009) to gain a detailed understanding of the study focus (see Creswell, 2012, 2014).

The criteria for selecting participants were that participants were teachers of all subjects at Hill Elementary in Grades 2 to 6. For the study, each teacher had to have a degree in primary education and be professionally trained to teach at the elementary level. All 10 teachers fit these criteria and were therefore eligible for participation in the study. I emailed the 10 teachers seeking their participation. A consent form was emailed to the participants, explaining the purpose of the study, the benefits of participating, my role as the researcher in the study, the design of the study, the risks, if any, the guarantee of confidentiality, and the idea that person can opt out at any time. Although 10 teachers were sent consent forms, I learned that only eight teachers were available to participate

because two teachers were on study leave when the interviews were to be conducted. Four teachers responded and returned the consent forms. I emailed the other four participants again; however, they did not respond. All four teachers who responded were selected and participated. Creswell (2014) suggested that only a few cases are necessary in qualitative research studies when selecting participants because, generally, the fewer the participants, the deeper the inquiry per individual. Fewer participants allowed me to gather thicker descriptive data that were coded into emerging themes about each participant at the target site (see Creswell, 2014). In keeping my sample small, I was able to engage in deeper inquiry with each participant. In conducting my research, there was enough information from each participant during the data collection, and enough data were collected through the interviews and lesson plans to substantiate the information being sought (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). Coding for further data was no longer feasible in the study; hence, data saturation was reached (see Fusch & Ness, 2015). In my research, all the participants were asked the same questions from the interview protocol, so many of the answers overlapped from each participant. As the researcher, I engaged participants in in-depth questioning to obtain in-depth answers.

Establishing a Researcher-Participant Relationship

In this study, I was the researcher and main human instrument and the research tool. I was also the interviewer, so I allowed participants to become comfortable by initiating simple conversations with them. I also reassured them that the questions chosen were subjective and that my role as the researcher was separate from my position at the research site. I was the sole researcher and an active participant. I also let participants

understand that participating was voluntary and that what they shared would be used only for the purpose of the research. I also shared with them how the research could benefit them in teaching and learning.

Gaining Access to Research Site

I gained access to the school site by asking permission from the school principal and the regional director for the region where Hill Elementary is located. I provided both the principal and regional director with a letter outlining the purpose of the study and my reason for doing the study. As soon as I obtained approval of my study from the principal, regional director, and Walden IRB, I requested email addresses of teachers in the school from the regional director. I then sent out requests through email to all teachers for their voluntary participation in the study. In the email, I explained to participants the purpose of the study and requested their consent to participate in the attached consent form. In the consent form, I explained to the participants the design of the study, the purpose, and the description of the procedures as well as that their participation was voluntary. I also informed them that if they refused to continue participation, there would be no penalty, as well as any potential risks and benefits of participating in the study. I explained to the participants that pseudonyms would be used to protect their identity and that confidentiality at all levels would be maintained. Finally, I asked participants to carefully read the consent form before signing. Follow-up was done through email to ensure participants had received the initial email. After participants indicated their willingness to participate, in both emails they were asked to provide a date and time that

was convenient for us to sign the consent form and conduct the interview, lasting 45 minutes to an hour.

Measures for Ethical Protection

Ethical protection is a consideration as long as the study involves human subjects. This case study involved human subjects and thus the question of ethics was of utmost importance. I sought approval from the Walden IRB. For this research, I considered the question of ethics equally as important to the credibility or dependability of the data collected. I protected the interests of everyone involved, which included obtaining informed consent, protecting privacy, maintaining confidentiality, and being sensitive and respectful to all participants involved. This was done by using pseudonyms prior to starting this proposal, and I also completed a certificate of training in Protection of Human Subjects. This training prepared me to better protect human subjects and to take the necessary steps to protect participants within the study. This training educated me on how to follow ethical guidelines in the research process.

After requesting and receiving email addresses from the principal and senior education officer at Hill Elementary, I emailed the participants about the purpose of the study, which included informed consent outlining their rights and privacy, the purpose of the study, the procedure for the data collection and storage, and the analysis and reporting. Participants had 2 to 3 days in which to review the consent form. According to Bickman and Rog (2009), the researcher should maintain confidentiality and be respectful to all participants. After participants agreed to participate in the study, we met at an agreed upon location and time selected by each participant to sign the consent and

conduct the interview. The interview data will be stored at my house on a computer that is password protected for 5 years, and I am the only one who has access to the computer. Any paper records used will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at home, which is only accessible to me. Pseudonyms were used to ensure the school and participants' privacy and confidentiality from those other than the researcher.

Data Collection

Data collection began immediately after approval from the Walden IRB and school administration, and participant consent. The study was conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule and document review of lesson plans. For this study I conducted one formal interview to determine the instructional strategies teachers use while teaching students in poverty. Document analysis of four lesson plans, one from each teacher, was done to complement the interview data.

Interviews

There are many reasons for using interviews in qualitative studies. However, I used interviewing as the main data source for this study for four reasons. First, qualitative interviewing is used to gather data which involve studying the meaning of participants' lived world (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Second, the purpose of interviewing is to learn what someone is thinking. Third, qualitative interviews result in thick descriptions of the study participants that enable readers to make decisions about transferability of study results (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Finally, interviews allow the researcher to triangulate the information acquired from other sources and, thus increase the credibility of study findings (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The interview was used to address all research questions. I interviewed four participants for this study. This allowed for identifying and obtaining knowledge from those who Patton (2002) called, “key informants”. Key informants are people who are particularly knowledgeable about the inquiry setting and articulate about their knowledge, and whose insights can be helpful in assisting an observer in understanding events that have happened and reasons why those events happened. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2010), an interview is “a purposeful conversation, usually between two people but sometimes involving more, that is directed by one to get information from the other” (p. 79). Merriam (2009) defined interview as “the process by which the researcher and participant engage in conversation focused on questions related to the research” (p. 97). The purpose of an interview in a case study is to get special information. Bogdan and Biklen opined that the purpose of an interview in research is to gather descriptive data from the participants in person collecting their own words, and this is usually used to help the researcher to gain insight into how participants interpret aspects of the world. I asked questions to get answers from participants on strategies they are using to teach students in poverty.

The interview protocol consists of 12 questions that I developed (see Appendix B). I used the semi-structured interview approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and a uniform set of open-ended questions to obtain: (a) demographic information on the participants, and (b) participants’ perceptions and experiences with collecting, analyzing, and using data for the purpose of improving instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty. I used open-ended questions in the interview protocol to allow participants to

respond freely and openly to queries (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010; Esterberg, 2002; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Probing and follow-up questions were used as needed, to encourage participants to elaborate on or clarify a response (Denzin & Lincoln, 2009).

After receiving consent from participants to participate in the study I scheduled the time and meeting room at school or at a place that was preferable for the participant for the interviews to be done. The interviews were held in the staffroom and the office of one participant for convenience. The interview was audio recorded with the permission of the participants to ensure accurate transcription (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I conducted all interviews face to face and each interview lasted from 45 minutes to an hour. I interviewed the participants during November through December 2017. I also took handwritten notes during each interview, which allowed me to highlight key points to return to later in the interview or to document ideas of importance. As a first step in the interview process, I reminded participants of the purpose of the study, research procedures, expected benefits, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and protection of confidentiality. I also asked participants if they had any questions about the research study or research procedures. I also provided information about myself to establish rapport and gain their trust (Patton, 2002).

In addition to audiotaping the interviews, which was later transcribed, I took notes during the interviews. I began the transcription process after the first interview and continued throughout January of 2018. To ensure transcript accuracy I reviewed each transcript while listening to the audio tapes. Additionally, later I met with the participants at a time of their choosing for the purpose of member checking. The transcripts were

presented to each interview participant for their review to ensure accuracy. Member checking and peer debriefing were implemented to help interpret the results of the data analysis to reinforce the dependability and validity of the findings. Member checking is discussed in greater detail in the data analysis section.

Justification for use of interviews. Interviews are used to gather data in participants' own words from which insights on their own interpretations can be drawn (Merriam, 2009). In a qualitative study interviews form the basis of rich conversation. For this research interviews were used to collect data because rich information can be gathered from participants pertaining to instructional strategies that teachers are using. Because the study was a case study, I needed to collect information on the site from participants who are involved in the teaching and learning of students. Case study research uses interviews because interviews present a body of knowledge. The justification for using interviews in this case study was that I was investigating a contemporary phenomenon of instructional strategies used to teach students in poverty. The case study phenomenon is concerned with describing real word phenomena rather than describing normative models in this case instructional strategies (Creswell, 2012, 2014). Therefore, the use of interviews in this case study was a highly appropriate method for investigating the use of instructional strategies to teach students in poverty.

Document Review

Even though interviews were the main method of data collection, I also collected and reviewed documents. Document review was used to substantiate or clarify participants' statements (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), and to provide a thick description of

the case (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A total of four lesson plans were reviewed one from each participant. I used the lesson plan checklist document (Appendix C) to ensure that all aspects of the lessons were included. During the process of this research, once the data were examined thoroughly through the open-coding process, I followed through by reviewing the codes for emerging themes in the data.

Document review and justification. I collected a total of four literacy and language arts lesson plans per participant to find out what instructional strategies were written in the lesson plans and used to teach students in poverty and examined them to understand the context of the teachers' classroom practices. The collection of four lesson plans (one per teacher) allowed me to examine and analyze the strategies teachers were using. Only one plan from each participant was available at the time of data collection because lesson plans were collected by the NEI to be vetted and not returned. The teacher participants were all primary trained teachers who teach all subjects in primary grades.

The Role of the Researcher

I am currently a senior teacher at Hill Elementary and have been in that role since September 2001. Concurrent with that position I also worked as a literacy specialist for six schools, including Hill Elementary, from September 2012 to July 2016. As literacy specialist my job was to present literacy strategies to teachers to improve their delivery of language and literacy in their classrooms. The teacher is then responsible for taking these strategies back to their classrooms to teach their students.

My role in this study was the sole researcher and active participant. I was responsible for designing and reporting the entire research. I was responsible for emailing

participants as a part of the recruiting process to collect the data. I was be responsible for conducting the interviews and the document reviews. As the researcher I ensured that the interview questions provided participants with an opportunity to share their opinions and feelings about various aspects of teaching and learning at the school and their instructional strategies.

My personal involvement was to conduct the research and review the documents at the site. I was personally involved in the analytic procedure for the research. I deliberately interacted in a personal way by audiotaping interviews and making notes while conducting the interviews. As an educator for many years I am passionate about children who are less fortunate within the educational setting. I am also curious about the strategies used to teach them as sometimes teachers' use whole group approach, which does not cater to the needs of all learners within the class.

As a teacher who has experience with teaching students in poverty using a variety of strategies and differentiated instruction, I recognize that I possess certain biases toward strategies that are most successful in teaching students in poverty. I believe I am aware of skills and tools that can be tailored to teach each student. I believe that the most critical ingredient in the academic success of at-risk students is effective teaching. I think that differentiated instruction is the best approach; however, there are some teachers who continue to use the whole group approach, which in my mind is not working. I am also aware of strategies teachers use to teach. I am also aware that when differentiated instruction is planned and properly taught students' grades improve.

Bias was minimized in that I used multiple sources of data to collect information regarding this case study. I also used member checking and triangulation to ensure that data collected were accurate and reflect what the participants have stated. First, reflected upon any relationship I previously had with participants as the literacy specialist. I did not have any close relationship with any of the participants during my tenure with them. Since my tenure was up as literacy specialist, I do not think my current role at the school caused any biases with this research data collection. However, I took extra precaution to avoid any bias since I was the only researcher. Finally, I followed several procedures to ensure accuracy of data collected. I used quality indicators and data collection methods to reduce any bias as it relates to the qualitative data collection. I discussed more regarding the steps that will be taken to ensure the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the data in the data analysis section.

Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved determining how each participant uses instructional strategies in their classrooms based on their responses to the interview questions and lesson plans. An instructional strategy is a strategy used by teachers to teach students and assist them in becoming independent learners (Meador, 2018). Prior to the data analysis, I transcribed the audio-recording of the interviews. The purpose of recording permits the investigator to develop familiarity with the data (Creswell, 2012, 2014). I followed Creswell's (2014) six steps during the data analysis process. Even though the steps are presented in linear order the steps are not static:

- Step 1. Prepared and organized data for analysis. During this step I reviewed the audio tapes from interviews, then I transferred the data into Word document transcripts.
- Step 2. During this stage I read through the data to get to know the data. I also reflected on the data to get an overall meaning and a general sense of the information that the participants conveyed.
- Step 3. I began the detailed analysis of the coding process. Then I followed Creswell's procedure for organizing the materials into segments by taking the text data and segmenting it into sentences and categories. After that I labelled the categories with terms that were based on the actual language from participants.
- Step 4. I used this process to generate codes for the descriptions, this led me to a smaller number of categories or themes.
- Step 5. For this step I connected the emergent themes into narrative passages, so that the findings emerged logically from participants responses.
- Step 6. During this stage my own interpretation played an important role due to my experience as a teacher and a literacy coordinator. This informed my understanding of the participant's stories. I focused specifically on what participants responded the conclusions they draw and their intentions for future practice

I created Microsoft Word files for the interview and lesson plan data. These files were secured by setting a password. These files were then saved to my personal computer at my home for access later. I was the only one to have access to these files. Interview

transcripts were used, and information summarized. The data will be safely stored for the duration of 5 years.

Qualitative researchers seek to understand how people behave and what experiences they possess (Bogdan & Biklen, 2010). For this research I wanted to uncover the process by which these teachers construct meaning from their teaching and how these meanings are interpreted. According to Patton (2002), the final activity in the research process is not data collection, but the analysis, interpretation, and presentation of the findings. Therefore, in my research the analysis was the final activity in which I presented the findings after establishing rigorous checks for validity and trustworthiness. The data analysis consisted of two cycles of coding. The first cycle involved provisional and open coding and the second cycle used pattern coding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2013).

Provisional coding was used to initially analyze and summarize the data (Miles et al., 2013). I interpreted the data by looking at patterns of meaning in categories that already existed in the literature review and the research questions as part of the provisional coding process. Patton (2002) suggested that researchers identify their research concerns in literature that is published on a topic so that themes will be identified to get a better understanding of the research topic. The research studies cited in the instructional strategies section of this paper were used to provide provisional codes. The analysis was done by looking at excerpts that refer to the same concept theme or event that emerged in the literature review. I used coding software (Nvivo 10) to code the interviews and lesson plans for relevant key words and assign pre-selected codes to the

data based on the literature review. Creswell (2012) suggested that researchers look at their research concerns and the literature published on their research topic to identify themes that are significant for understanding the research topic. Therefore, data were analyzed by looking for patterns of meaning using five preexisting categories derived from the literature review and the research questions. I used abbreviations to develop codes for each category. For example, the code for instructional strategies was represented by IS, literacy instruction by LI, TP for teacher perceptions, DI for differentiated instruction, and professional development was represented by PD.

Merriam (2009) stated that coding allows the researcher to locate excerpts from all interviews, observations, and documents that refer to the same concept. Open coding was done by taking notes following the interview in which emerging themes were identified. I listened to the interview recordings and read the resulting verbatim transcription to continue the process. I carefully read and reread the transcripts looking for keywords, trends, and themes or ideas in the data that helped to form the analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). I then conducted a thematic analysis to draw out important points. Initial coding was done using a computer software Nvivo 10 which is a software designed for qualitative research. The themes discovered were able to provide accurate reflections of what participants meant.

According to Miles et al. (2013), pattern codes are explanatory codes and used to tie together information from the first cycle of the coding process. I was looking for meaningful sections of sentences and specific wording which assisted in creating themes and patterns for interpretation (Yin, 2014). The goal was to ultimately identify

reoccurring themes and patterns within the data while comparing segments of information.

I searched for data that were contrary from the main data collected. Therefore, I looked for information in the data that contradicts an emerging category within the data such as something that contradicts that students in poverty need specific teaching strategies then look to see if this is a negative case. However, if there were no “negative cases” then I looked to see if the data had a variant perspective, which is a “discrepant case” (Merriam, 2009, p. 206). This was what was called discrepant data. Discrepant data is contradictory evidence to what is collected helped me to look at the evidence I have collected in a more thought out and organized way and giving more careful attention to all details (see Yin, 2009, 2014).

I met with each of the participants and discussed the findings concerning them. Then I reread the comments over and over to ensure that the findings were accurate. This was presented in a narrative form.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

A narrative discussion of findings called member checking was presented to participants. In research it is imperative to adhere to trustworthiness throughout the entirety of the process (Merriam, 2009). The objective for this research was to present an accurate representation of what the participants have stated. Member checking of participant responses provided accuracy of data by participant. Additional steps that were taken to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of the data are discussed in the next sections

Triangulation in case studies is done in several ways to ensure trustworthiness. The strategy to guarantee the accuracy, credibility, and trustworthiness of this study involved several procedures. Triangulating is a process of studying data from a variety of sources (Creswell, 2014). Triangulating involves searching for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes and categories (see Creswell, 2014). For this research the purpose of triangulation was to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena being studied for this research (Shenton, 2004). Also, triangulation was done to support data collected from documents, this helped me to examine attitudes and behavior of participants and verify details that were collected. Triangulation was done by reviewing the two data sources, asking participants to check data for accuracy, and reviewing the evidence from each data source to confirm consistency in themes. I also looked at responses from the interview text transcripts to examine participants' views and compared them with each other (Shenton, 2004). Specific questions were posed to get exact information about poverty and instructional strategies

Member checking is one of the procedures I used to ensure credibility. Member checking is confirming data with the participants (Creswell, 2012, 2014). Member checking is providing each participant in the study with a selection of the findings that are relevant to the particular participant (usually themes and their own statements that contributed to each theme) for their own data, having them review those findings and providing each an opportunity to discuss the findings with the researcher (Carlson, 2010). Member checking was done to verify my findings for this research. I continued to revisit

the data to ensure rigorous scrutiny making sure that data collected is accurate and meaningful. I also ensured that participants' contributions are accurate. I reviewed each interview transcript while listening to audio tapes of the interview to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflect the exact statement of the participants. Then I reviewed each coding process to ensure that my meaning accurately matched the participant's comments.

To also strengthen the validity of this research a peer reviewer was sought. The peer reviewer was a university professor who was familiar with working with qualitative research. The peer reviewer has a Ph.D. in Leadership and Research studies and is a research chair in my former university's research program. The peer reviewer was familiar with the research content and qualified to review the research. The peer reviewer did not know the identity of the participants and signed a confidentiality document to ensure that the confidentiality of the participants was kept. The confidentiality agreement was a document prepared by me. No names were on any of the transcripts or was the peer reviewer told who answered the questions at any time. Pseudonyms were used throughout the entire process.

Reliability and Transferability

The test for reliability verifies that the research procedures and findings can be replicated by other parties (Yin, 2009, 2014). According to Merriam (2009), to gain reliability the data should be examined repeatedly to arrive at the same results. In this research I examined interview notes taken during the interview and the transcripts from the audiotapes repeatedly to ensure that notes taken were highly descriptive of the real

interview process so that the reader felt as if he/she were present at the actual interview (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, as mentioned above, I used peer review to check for the logical development of themes. I discussed the process of the study and the congruency of emerging findings with the data and the tentative interpretations with the peer reviewer to strengthen the reliability of the study. To assist in transferability, I clearly described the context to assist the reader in transferring results to similar settings.

Data Analysis Results

This section consists of the following subsections, how the data were generated, gathered, and recorded. It also contains the findings organized by themes within the research questions; and summary of the findings in connection to the conceptual framework and prior research. I also discuss the member checking that I implemented to assist in interpreting the results of the data analysis and to reinforce the dependability and validity of the findings.

How the Data Were Generated, Gathered, and Recorded

The purpose of this research study was to explore the instructional strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty. I received approval from the Walden IRB on November 9, 2017 and followed a uniform protocol to collect the data for this study to ensure that the interviews yielded data consistent with the study's goals. Qualitative data collection included semi structured interview and document review from lesson plan data. The data collected were used to answer four research questions and sub questions. Analyzing these qualitative data included finding codes and recurring themes of the perceptions of teachers at Hill Elementary school. Member checking, peer debriefing, and

direct quotes from the participant interviews were used to explain, reinforce, and interpret the data analysis and findings for this study. The triangulation of the data contributed to the thick rich description of in-depth information.

The study provided insights of participants' best instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty. During in-depth interviews the study participants described their perceptions of students in poverty and the strategies that are used to teach them. They also discussed their use of instructional strategies and best practices that they use for students in poverty to be successful in local and national exams. The research findings that are reported in this section are based on interview transcriptions and review of lesson plans.

Findings

There were four teachers who participated in the study. Each participant had 12 or more years of experience teaching students in poverty. For reporting purposes, and protection of participants identities each participant was given a pseudonym (e.g., Participant 1, Participant 2). Interviewees contributed different views to the themes presented. The participants widely spoke extensively on all themes. Thus, all participants' views and voices are presented in the findings. The major and minor themes can be found in Table 3, which are based on participants' responses to the interview questions. First, I will provide a summary of the findings for the four main research questions which is separate from the themes from the findings and then discuss the themes derived from the responses. The research questions were:

1. What instructional strategies do teachers use when teaching students in poverty?

2. What instructional strategies do teachers believe are most effective for teaching students in poverty?
3. How equipped do teachers believe they are to teach students in poverty?
4. What assistance (e.g., professional development, training) would teachers like from the Hill Elementary administration and school district to better meet the academic needs of students in poverty?

RQ1: What instructional strategies do you use when teaching students in poverty? I used interview questions 1 to 6 to address the first research question. The findings indicated that all participants use cooperative learning and differentiated instruction when teaching students in poverty. One participant used research-based strategies, problem-based learning, sight word wall, role play storytelling, and word games to teach students in poverty. Findings also indicated that cooperative learning strategy was used to improve students learning in the school. Participants provided examples of strategies that they use to teach students in poverty and how these methods differ from how students not in poverty are taught. All of the participants responded they used cooperative learning. Participant 1 stated, “I use cooperative learning in my class a lot because students work in groups well and they learn from each other.” Participant 2 said, “I use cooperative learning and grouping in my class.” Participant 4 responded, “I use cooperative learning a lot in my class because students are more cooperative when I place them in groups my objectives [are] always met when I group them; also learning in groups is beneficial to both the learner and you the teacher, as the learn more and your lesson objectives met

When participants were asked how they use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their classrooms Participant 3 responded, “I use these strategies during guided learning where some students are assisted. Participant 2 likewise responded similarly that during guided learning cooperative learning and differentiation of lesson activities are used. Participants 1 and 4 responded they use these strategies in almost all classes even in teaching numeracy. All respondents reported that these strategies as useful in their classrooms. It was also stated that these strategies cater to the learning needs of students from diverse cultural backgrounds and students at differing learning levels.

Following the question of how students react to teaching and learning while they use these strategies, Participant 1 shared the following:

Students cooperate with teacher and show more interest in whatever they are doing. I use prior learning to get a better understanding of what students already know in order to teach them. When I use this strategy, I see results and evidence of learning.

According to the teacher, it was evident that students’ prior knowledge contributed to their understanding of concept taught. Participant 2 shared,

I use prior learning to draw from student what they already know, what they need to learn and what they want to learn, When I use this strategy, I am able to zero in on what are their needs and evidence of learning and plan to cater to those needs. I see more complete activities and students speak freely about their experiences.

Also, students understand how learning is influenced by individual experiences, talents and prior learning as well language their language and culture.

Students feel more comfortable when they are engaged with their peers, hence, they are more receptive. It was evident that students were comfortable using the strategy and this resulted in greater class participation.

Participant 3 responded that students work more. The participant stated that

Prior learning is used to draw from students' schema what they know and build on what they know for effective learning. In order for me to know if learning is taking place, I must first draw from my students what they already know and build on it.

Participant 4 responded, "I see students more actively engaged in the lesson and activities given completed to 100% accuracy." Therefore, all participants responded that students are more comfortable and cooperative when these strategies are used hence learning can be more meaningful.

When participants were asked if students are motivated to learn and seem interested all participants said yes. Participant 2 stated that students are motivated and interested when working with their peers. Participant 2 further stated,

I think students are interested but they come to school without pencils, books. It makes you wonder where the parents are. If you give homework, they tell you parents have no time to assist them, some of the homes don't even have a reading book or any prints at all.

Participant 3 also agreed “that students are more motivated, they pay more attention in class and activities are completed effectively.” Participant 4 stated, “that students are more engaged, focused, and more attentive when placed in groups to work with their peers.” Participant 4 also stated that “students do not want to leave school even after dismissal. They stay on the compound until teachers are leaving.” Hence, poverty created additional barriers that the teachers must first overcome to effectively educate students and address the gap in literacy achievement that is present at the school. The use of cooperative learning strategies and differentiated instruction was found to be beneficial to the success of both teachers and students within the school. Students are motivated to learn but they lack the necessary resources in the home.

RQ 2: What instructional strategies do teachers believe are most effective for teaching students in poverty? I used Interview Questions 7 to 9 to address the second research question. When participants were asked which instructional strategies are most effective with students in poverty, Participants 1, 3 and 4 responded cooperative based learning, while Participant 2 responded with using hands-on materials; however, teachers stated that materials for the lesson were needed for the strategies to be more effective. All participants emphasized the importance of technology and relatable literature in their classroom. For example, Participant 1 stated,

I need access to the Internet, computers and projectors so that I can bring the experience to the learner so the learner can make connections to what is being taught. I also need multicultural literature text to teach my students about other experiences.

Participant 2 believed teaching would be more effective with access to the internet.

Participant 3 stated, “I need multicultural literature, the internet and a multimedia projector so that I can bring real experiences to the learners in my class”. Participant 4 stated, “I need resources. The internet is necessary in this 21st century. Most of these children are born into technology I cannot teach them effectively without the use of available technology”. All teachers not only believed technology to be important in their classrooms but also a vital tool in the 21st century.

When participants were asked how they determine that strategies used are effective, Participant 1 stated “structured classwork, in that students work cooperatively and neatly. As the teacher I can see where students sequence their work get a better understanding of activities given”. Participant 2 determines the effectiveness of strategies by having more engaged and focused students. Participant 3 also responded alike that students are more focused and engaged while Participant 4 stated that it was obvious in their classwork being more focused and structured. Teachers also used documented data of students’ scores to determine if strategies they were using were effective. Evidence of data documented based on assessments given showed the effectiveness of the strategies. This was also evident in the improvement of the literacy scores in 2016 to 2017 from the prior research.

In Interview Question 9, participants were asked what improvements they have seen in students’ overall performance as a result of the specific instructional strategies being used. Participant 1 stated, “that students are more comfortable when they work with their peers; lesson is more beneficial.” Participant 2 stated, “students work better with

peers as they seem comfortable.” Participant 3 stated, “I get more out of them when they work in peers, they will collaborate and complete tasks given in a timely manner.”

Participant 4 stated, “I think working in pairs can be a disadvantage sometimes. I need individual work; however, they are more effective in completing the tasks given working in peers and collaborative groups.” The participants further stated that students can take their own experience to a different level of ability and use it to improve their understanding of a subject. Participant 1 also stated, “[cooperative learning] allows students to learn from each other [and] boosts their self-confidence. I think they enjoy working with each other than individually.” Participant 3 stated that, “students are able to compare, criticize, and evaluate their own work”. Hence cooperative learning was a strategy reported as being effectively used by all participants in their respective classes.

Teachers also reported improvements specifically related to literacy performance. All four participants alluded to the improvement in literacy at the class level and also on the standardized tests sent from the MOE. Participant 4 responded, that “they are reading more fluently, [with] improvement in numeracy and skills taught. Hence, showing evidence of improvement after the use of instructional strategy”. Participant 3 stated “I have seen improvement in comprehension and reading in my class, also on the literacy test sent from the ministry, test scores in literacy also improve”. Participant 2 stated, “I have seen phonetics improve, students are making use of phonetic skills to pronounce big words hence improved reading and fluency”. Participant 1 stated, “I am so delighted my students are showing improvement in test scores, classwork, comprehension skills so I am encouraged. I just need to be taught more PD on a one-to-one basis so overall

improvement will be seen in all areas of my students.” All the respondents reported overwhelmingly that PD was effective yet PD needs to be provided on a one on one basis to realize its full effect.

RQ3: How equipped do teachers believe they are to teach students in poverty? I used interview questions 10 to 12 to address how equipped teachers believe they are to teach students in poverty. Participant 1 responded,

One can never be fully prepared. It takes a lot to prepare for these students and the school lacks the necessary resources. We have to plan with each individual in mind as students are at different learning levels.

Participant 2 stated,

I think I am not fully equipped I need more support of PD to assist me in my preparation of lessons and strategies to teach my lessons. I also need more PD demonstrating lesson plans. However, I am trying with the little I learn so far. By the use of 75% written plans and preparation of teaching aids to match or assist with each lesson taught.

Participants 3 and 4 expressed similar sentiment regarding not thinking they were prepared to teach students in poverty.

The participants discussed some of the ways that they try to become equipped for teaching students from diverse social backgrounds. Participant 4 stated that

The written plans used contains collaborative strategies and differentiated instruction which is equipped to teach the students to ensure success in literacy.

Preparation of all the resources based on the lesson is in place as much as

possible. I am also equipped with learning videos based on lesson to aid in learning of students and lesson delivery.

In answering the question, the participants spoke of how they make the necessary preparations to get themselves equipped to meet the needs of the learners as much as possible. Some participants stated what resources they needed to be more effective teachers. Participant 3 stated,

Even though I had experience and background knowledge I need materials in order to fully prepare to teach these students. Materials were lacking. As the teacher I had to search all over to get materials I need to fully prepare for them.

Participant 1 stated, “I need materials that are lacking to effectively teach these students. I need multicultural literature text. I also need access to the internet and working computers.” Participant 1 also mentioned that these children need special attention when teaching. And stated that, “As teachers of students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds I do not think we are fully equipped to teach these students, we need to get more resources, also plans and activities has to be tailored to suit the needs of these students as much as possible”. Overall, teachers thought they needed resources to be more equipped to successfully meet the learners need.

When respondents were further asked where they find strategies to teach students in poverty, Participant 1, 2, and 3 stated that they attended literacy workshops and got research strategies from the internet. Participant 4 stated, “Nowhere! I use classroom observations to plan strategies to teach students”. In other words, this participant uses students’ experiences based on personal observation to teach them.

In Interview Question 12, I asked what learning experiences have been more productive in teaching students in poverty. Findings once again, indicated that the cooperative learning strategies and differentiated instruction were most effective. This strategy gives teachers more support from students and more cooperation of all students in the learning experiences. The participants indicated that this elementary school is a multi-grade small school with most of the students living in poverty. Hence, poverty created additional barriers that the teachers must overcome first to effectively teach these students. There is also a gap in the literacy development of these students. One of the goals of the school is for teachers to effectively plan lessons which will affect students' performance in literacy. The goal of PD is to provide teachers with the skills and best practices for instructional development. The teachers cited that the key to effective instruction is collaborative PD. A variety of strategies are needed to teach students in poverty. However, these must be focused on best practices and showing teachers how to scaffold student learning, as Participant 1 said, "I use their experiences to teach and plan for them." The findings indicate that PD should be carefully planned and should use teacher collaboration which is focused on best practices for teaching literacy skills.

Additionally, in response to, what learning experiences have been more productive to them in teaching students in poverty all participants discussed the benefits of using students' real-life experiences. Participant 1 stated that she incorporates students' real-life situations into the actual lesson. The participant said, "I think real-life situations allow the children to be able to connect with reality. They are able to relate to what they are learning and making connections." Participant 2 stated, "allowing the

students to process and create their own experiences to achieve the desired outcome” has been a productive learning experience. Participant 3 stated that through cooperative learning “students cooperate with each other in a group setting in which they speak freely about their experiences. I think when students are paired the learning experience is more beneficial as more activities are completed, students work together and cooperate so a lot more is done from the objectives of the lesson.” Participant 4 stated that

As a teacher you link their real-life experiences with what is being taught so that they better understand the concept. How this is done in class I allow a session called free talk in which children are allowed to talk freely about their experiences in groups. I see greater improvement in their test grades and class activities.

Based on the responses from all participants, real-life situations and use of cooperative learning were the most dominant learning experiences for teaching students in poverty. Participants were passionate about the use of strategies in their classrooms and also confident that they saw improvement in students test grades in their various classes.

When participants were asked to explain why they think these experiences had been productive, Participant 1, stated, “These experiences allowed students to achieve the desired outcome of the lesson.” Participant 2 stated, “real-life experiences allow children to make sense of their learning,” while Participant 3 stated real-life experiences make lessons more easily understood by all students as they are able to relate to what is being taught in their own way. Participant 4 stated that “these experiences assist learners in socializing as they share similar experiences.” Based on the responses from the

participants it was evident that students' own experiences along with cooperative learning strategy were learning experiences that were useful in teaching students in poverty.

Q4: What assistance (e.g., professional development, training) would teachers like from the Hill Elementary administration and school district to better meet the academic needs of students in poverty? I used Interview Questions 13 and 14 to address this research question. In the interview question 13 I asked participants about the PD training most useful to them in teaching students in poverty. Participant 1 responded, "Workshop on the use of literacy strategies and research." Participant 2 attended a literacy workshop that allowed for acquiring strategies to teach reading. The participant stated that, "The workshop was useful as I learned simple strategies and activities that assist me in teaching reading." Participant 3 mentioned a workshop and research because

I gain more skills and information to better teach these students. The training was useful because I was able to practically view hands-on experience on how to articulate a lesson in reading to these children by seeing the PD person demonstrating the lesson while we were active participants.

Participant 4 stated that through PD, "I gain a better insight of how to plan lessons in the different subject areas to meet the needs of individual students in different subject areas." Based on the responses, PD workshops that were held assisted teachers to better plan lessons for the students in poverty.

Finally, when participants were asked what assistance, e.g., PD training they would you like from administration and school district to better meet the needs of these

students in poverty, Participants 1 responded with, “We need professional development workshops in literacy strategies at least once per month.” Participant 3 agreed about the frequency of workshops needed. Participants 2, 3, and 4 brought up the importance of parental involvement in teaching students in poverty. Participant 2 stated, “There is a need for more parental involvement in children’s school work.” Participant 3 stated, “These parents need workshops so that they can understand what they need to be there for their children. Some of them don’t even know what happens with their children. They don’t even attend PTA.” Participant 4 stated, “I do not know how these parents think, they are not interesting in their children’s education, every day they leave early for their farms without even preparing the children for school, these parents need workshops which will teach them the importance of their involvement in their children’s education.” Hence, the need for more parental involvement to improve students’ literacy scores.

The findings for the subquestion what additional training would teachers like to support literacy at the elementary school indicated that more PD and more parental involvement will assist teachers to teach students in poverty. The school was stigmatized as a falling school in 2013 by the then MOE. The school lacked the necessary resources and the participants reported that there is little or no parental involvement. Hence there were several resources that the school lacked to support the literacy development of the targeted student population. Therefore, the teachers all agreed that there should be a plan of action put in place to address the needs of the students to overcome this barrier of low literacy performance and allow for them to become functionally literate citizens.

Participants 1, 2, and 4 reported on the need for multicultural resources.

Participant 1 indicated that training in PD was done but none addressed the use of using multicultural resources to teach literacy instruction. Participant 2 stated, “I have received PD training which helps me in my lesson plan, however I think training should be done in the use of multicultural resources.” Participant 4 said the PDs were helpful and assisted teachers in planning better plan and effective delivery, however more training should be done to facilitate the use of multicultural resources for the teaching of students in poverty. Because students are from diverse cultural backgrounds then there was a need for teachers to be taught how to teach students literacy instructions through multicultural texts.

Overall, the findings from the data as related to RQ4 indicated that teachers think they need more PD in strategies on how to teach literacy instruction and how to plan lessons to effectively meet the needs of all learners, especially multicultural learners. Teachers think they need the PD to be focused on best practices that work for teaching diverse students in poverty. The findings also revealed that the teachers need more PD to build their perceptions and to explore more effective literacy strategies to build students’ self-esteem. PD is also needed to provide increased awareness of how these elementary students who are living in poverty learn differently from those who are not. Additionally, teachers need to have access to literacy coaches who are familiar with multicultural curriculum that is geared towards teaching students in poverty.

Findings From Lesson Plans

In the following section I report the results of the document review of the four participant lesson plans. The analysis follows along with the summary of the overall findings. Table 2 includes the frequency of strategy occurrences in the lesson plans on a scale of never, sometimes, or always.

Table 2

Evidence of Objectives and Strategies in Lesson Plans

Names	Never	Sometimes	Always
Appropriateness of objectives		4	
Evidence of numeracy and literacy across instruction		1	3
Evidence of data driven instruction		2	2
Content appropriate and adequate		2	2
Methodology appropriate accommodation of evidence of at least two types of differentiated instruction		1	3
Evidence of infusion of Information and Communications Technology			4
Assessment aligned to objectives		4	
Previous evaluation completed and adequate		4	
Additional comments: Lesson had plans for differentiation; a lot of cooperative strategy was used for lesson.			4

Based on the document review Participant 1, 2, 3, and 4 lesson objectives were appropriate sometimes. This could mean that there needs to be PD in lesson planning. Evidence of literacy and numeracy across curriculum three of the participants had this always in their lesson plans while one responded sometimes. Two participants always had content appropriate while for the other two, content was sometimes appropriate. All the participants had evidence of data driven instructions in their lesson plans. The methodology was appropriate in all of the participants' lesson plans evidenced by at least two types of differentiated instruction. All participants had evidence of Information and Communications Technology in their lesson plans. In the assessment aspect of the lesson

plans, objectives were appropriate, and previous evaluation complete and adequate all of the participants responded sometimes. Overall, there was evidence of cooperative learning strategies and differentiation in all the plans reviewed.

Based on the document review of lesson plans cooperative learning strategy and differentiation was evident in all participants' lesson plans, however, based on the responses from the interviews there was evidence that there was the need for more PD of literacy strategies to teach students in poverty. Participants also stated that there was the need for more PD in lesson planning.

Themes From the Findings

Table 3 includes the themes that were developed from findings presented in the previous section. I identified five major themes and several minor themes based on the analyzed data. There was considerable overlap among the themes. Participants' responses to interview questions often addressed more than one theme. In such cases the interview data were described where they seem to fit most logically. These major themes are crucial in improving instructional practices for teaching literacy skills to diverse students living in poverty.

Table 3

Summary of Major and Minor Themes Derived From Research Data

Research questions	Major themes	Minor themes
RQ1	1. Use of students' prior knowledge/ experience to improve literacy performance.	
RQ2	1. Use of students' prior knowledge/ experience to improve literacy performance. 2. Cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are effective in teaching students in poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional coaching should be intentional. • The use of storytelling and word games to improve literacy performance. • The use of problem-based learning as a strategy to teach students in poverty.
RQ3	3. Limited resources affect students learning. 4. Poverty relates to students learning; hence teachers need to be equipped with the necessary materials to teach them.	
RQ4	5. More and frequent PD in literacy skills is necessary for teachers to students in poverty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD is needed that incorporates multicultural resources. • PD in parental involvement is necessary to build students literacy skills.

Theme 1: Use of students' prior knowledge/experience to teach students

improve literacy performance. Findings indicated that use of students' prior knowledge and experience was a strategy that is useful for teaching students in poverty. This was effective because teachers were able to teach from the known to the unknown. All participants stated that using students' prior learning experiences to teach them assisted in bringing new learning from what they had already learned. The participants also understood how students learning is influenced by individual experiences, talents, and prior learning as well as language, culture, family and community values.

Theme2: Cooperative learning and differentiated instruction are effective for teaching students in poverty. This first major theme emerged from all participants responses. Findings indicated that the use of literacy PD of cooperative learning strategy has supported the knowledge and skills of teachers to better teach students in poverty. The overwhelming perception from all participants were that cooperative learning strategy was beneficial for teaching students in poverty. Cooperative learning has the potential to be more effective in improving collaboration among students and foster increase in students' achievement All of the participants responded they used cooperative learning. The overarching perception from all participants were that cooperative learning and differentiated instruction were effective for teaching students in poverty. The findings all revealed that teachers' use of differentiated instruction supported students with mixed abilities to reach their full potential. The use of differentiated instruction also assisted teachers in tailoring instructions to suit the need of all learners in their classrooms. The findings from the document reviews also indicated all participants use cooperative learning and differentiated instructions in their lesson plans.

Minor themes. The minor theme instructional coaching was also evident based on the findings. Instructional coaching is key to successful teaching. Findings indicated that the instructional coaching strategy scaffolds teachers based on their needs according to teachers' instructional learning goals. The use of storytelling and word games were strategies to teach students in poverty

Themes 3 and 4: Limited resources affect students learning and poverty relates to students learning hence teachers need to be equipped with the necessary

materials to teach them. The findings indicated that due to the location of the school in an impoverished rural district there are several barriers that contributed to students' lack of success on literacy tests. All of the participants agreed that PD should be targeting specific goals which would educate teachers on the awareness of specific educational shortfalls that exist in rural areas. All participants responded that limited resources affect students learning. Therefore, more PD is needed to increase teachers' awareness about risk factors of students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Based on the findings Hill Elementary school has limited access to financial resources and classroom materials. Despite all these limitations all the participants believed that all children regardless of their socioeconomic backgrounds should be catered to and students should have access to the best quality education. Based on the findings also the school had limited access to financial resources and classroom materials to teach students in poverty.

Theme 5: More and frequent PD in literacy skills is necessary for teachers when teaching to students in poverty. Findings indicated that all the teachers responded that the literacy PD has supported their personal knowledge and skill development in teaching students in poverty. Participants stated that PD is more effective if it is intentionally set to focus on improving teachers' instructional practices that are relevant for teaching students in poverty. One participant argued that PD is effective in many ways, however it has a long way to go in assisting to improve students' achievement in literacy. Participants indicated that understanding how to teach literacy strategies to students in poverty is one thing, but another is to effectively teach students to achieve the success desired. All participants responded that they wanted the PD to take place at least

once per month since based on student test scores we are making some improvement (2015-2016 & 2016-2017). Participants further stated, “that PD positively influenced their professional practice when teaching literacy strategies to students in poverty however it did not explicitly address the most effective ways to teach students in poverty or low socioeconomic status”. Hence PD is important for assisting teachers in developing effective instructional strategies to teach students in poverty.

There was also overwhelming perception of all teachers that PD is beneficial and has the potential to improve the teacher’s perceptions if it is more focused on culturally responsive strategies for instructing students from diverse social and economic backgrounds. Teacher’s perceptions are their views of how they see themselves achieving set goals for students to accomplish which will increase their academic achievement. Based on the findings all participants indicated the need for more parental involvement. All the participants explicitly stated that parental involvement was necessary to build students literacy skills.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this section, I will discuss the six themes derived from the findings as they relate to the conceptual framework and the larger body of literature reported in Section 1. I will describe the ways the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend knowledge in the discipline. The themes are provided in Table 3.

Conceptual framework. This study was guided by the constructivist framework (Piaget, 1955; Vygotsky, 1978) to investigate the effectiveness of the strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty. The conceptual framework allows for

teachers to align teaching strategies with students' cognitive level. The goal is to help the students construct knowledge and assist students to develop literacy skills in becoming more successful learners. Theme 2 is connected to constructivism in that the constructivist theory encompasses the need for students to be actively engaged in their learning (Piaget, 1955; Vygotsky, 1978). The teachers in the study used cooperative learning and differentiated instructional strategies to support the learners in becoming actively engaged in learning (Theme 1). The teachers of students in poverty also emphasized the need for them to modify their teaching strategies and activities to assist their students in becoming successful learners.

Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development (ZPD) and Piaget's (1955) cognitive development theory establish that students should link their prior knowledge with new knowledge. Here Theme 1 use of prior learning and Theme 3, learning experience are linked to Vygotsky's theory in that Vygotsky believed that teachers can effectively combine student's prior learning and development to create social activities for students. The findings from these themes connect with the theory in that the findings revealed that teachers reported that they use students learning experiences to effectively teach them.

Vygotsky (1978) emphasized the importance of two areas of learning which should be considered by teachers, these are students' potential development and their actual developmental level of development, known as the ZPD. Vygotsky along with Piaget (1955) believed that students interact with their environment and are able to construct knowledge, and that interaction with their physical environment is key for

cognitive development. Within the ZPD, flexible grouping which can increase students' learning and academic performance in literacy is important. Also, important to the ZPD is prior knowledge that teachers should use to teach students. Students are also able to draw on prior knowledge to gain meaning from new information presented to them. Hence the constructivist view indicates that for effective learning to take place students must be actively engaged in drawing from previous learning experiences and actively connecting with them (see Bruner, 1975; Fosnot, 1996; Yager & Lutz, 1994).

The findings of Themes 1 to 3 align with the components of the constructivist theory. The concretization of the constructivist belief is embedded by certain beliefs that: (a) for learning to take place students must be fully engaged in the process; (b) creation of requisite knowledge is necessary; (c) for gaining new knowledge children need to formulate ideas not discover; (d) personal interaction is made through learning; (e) peer association results in learning; (f) when problems are solved based on difficulty this results in improved learning; and (g) finding meaning in the world is a result of students learning and are connected with research conducted by researchers (see Li et al., 2013; von Glasersfeld, 1995; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978, 1997).

Prior research. Participants stated that cooperative learning is an effective strategy that teachers of students in poverty can use to teach them (Theme 2). Laguador (2014), Clark (2018), and Taylor (2017) concluded that cooperative learning is effective for teaching students in poverty to develop these skills. Findings also indicated that differentiated instruction was effective for teaching students in poverty (Theme 2). This finding is very similar to research conducted by previous researchers (Brezicha et al.,

2015; Laguador, 2014; Maeng & Bell, 2015; Muthomi & Mbugua, 2014; Tomlinson, 2014). Tomlinson (2014) stated that teachers must first understand the teaching strategies of differentiated instruction to effectively teach students in poverty as students have different learning styles. The use of differentiated instruction is necessary for teachers to modify their instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. Maeng and Bell (2015) reported that differentiated instruction is effective for teaching students in poverty and that the use of differentiated instruction is more beneficial than the use of nondifferentiated instruction. Brezicha et al. (2015) also concluded that differentiated instruction positively influenced students' performance in poverty-stricken areas teaching students in poverty. Also, similar to the benefits of differentiated instruction found in Theme 2 for teaching students in poverty is research by Yagcioglu (2016), who found that using students' cognitive learning styles, which is a form of differentiated instruction, helps students develop cognitive strategies. Cognitive learning styles are used in the classroom with cooperative learning regularly. Yagcioglu concluded that the use of cognitive learning styles assists learners to be able to think critically for themselves and hence be able to solve complex problems.

Limited resources and poverty affect students learning were two others dominant themes (Themes 3 & 4) based on the findings. Teachers stated that they have limited access to financial resources and classroom materials. These findings are similar to Manini (2018), Burns et al. (2017), and Flores and Ferreira (2016) who stressed the importance of resources in teaching students in poverty. All the participants believed that

despite the setting all students should be treated with respect and have access to resources and highly qualified teachers who care about their well-being and their education.

Findings indicated that educators need more PD to build their skills and self-efficacy and to explore more diversity issues affecting low SES students and is necessary for teaching students in poverty (Theme 5). All participants believed that PD allows teachers to collaborate and plan effective lessons for teaching literacy to students in poverty. Participants all stated that PD allow teachers to plan, teach, receive feedback from lesson and be able to evaluate lesson and revise for future planning. PD allows teachers to be more knowledgeable about effective strategies to be used to cover specific contents. Prior researchers stated that relevant PD fosters teacher's growth in implementing differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies and are similar (see Flores & Ferreira, 2016; Taylor, 2017; Valiandes, 2015).

All participants believed that inclusion of multicultural resources is necessary for teaching students in poverty. Participants also reported that PD in parental involvement is necessary to build students literacy skills (a subtheme of Theme 5). This theme is very similar to research findings done by Garcia and Weiss (2019), who concluded that PD is necessary for teachers. The need also exists to garner a curriculum involving best practices which will cater to special lesson plans and materials from multicultural literature (subtheme of Theme 5). The findings of Theme 5 and relevant subthemes are similar to prior researchers (see Clark, 2018; Finnegan & Mazin, 2016; Taylor, 2017), who stated that the use of multicultural literature was effective for teaching students from poverty and diverse cultural backgrounds. Teaching using culturally responsive strategies

effects student motivation, behavioral issues, and improve literacy achievement (see Ford et al., 2014; Garcia & Chun, 2016).

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Member checking was done to verify the findings for this research. Member checking was done immediately after the transcriptions of the interview responses were done. All transcriptions were shared with all participants to ensure that what was transcribed were aligned to what they have stated or what they meant. The findings from the interviews and document reviews were shared with participants based on the themes so that participants were able to confirm the findings. I continued to revisit the data to ensure rigorous scrutiny making sure that data collected are accurate and meaningful. I also ensured that participants' contributions are accurate. I reviewed each interview transcript while listening to audio tapes of the interview to ensure that the transcripts accurately reflect the exact statement of the participants (see sample transcript in Appendix D). Then I reviewed each coding process to ensure that my interpretation accurately matched the participant's comments.

In this research I examined interview notes taken during the interview and the transcripts from the audiotapes repeatedly to ensure that notes taken were highly descriptive of the real interview process so that the reader feels as if he/she was present at the actual interview (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, as mentioned above, I used peer review to check for the logical development of themes. The person I used is a university lecturer. The interview questions were sent for review before the interviews. Then the lecturer reviewed the interview responses. I discussed the process of the study and the

congruency of emerging findings with the data and the tentative interpretations with the peer reviewer to strengthen the reliability of the study. To assist in transferability, I clearly described the context to assist the reader in transferring results to similar settings.

Summary and Project Deliverable as an Outcome

This case study was done to explore participants' use of instructional strategies to teach students in poverty. Based on the data analysis there were six major themes derived from the four research questions (see Table 3). The findings showed that all participants view PD in literacy strategies as important and necessary. PD is most significant to both student learning and teacher learning. The participants agreed that there is the need for more PD in literacy strategies that focus on students' culture to teach students in poverty and to create more parental involvement and partnerships with parents. The introduction of an instructional literacy coach would also be most beneficial to improve teachers' teaching of literacy within the school district. Based on the results of this study, a 3-day PD workshop should be designed to address ways to improve teacher's instructional strategies for teaching literacy to diverse students in poverty in an elementary school. The ultimate goal is to provide teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators with the most effective culturally responsive instructional strategies and best practices to meet the needs of the diverse students in poverty in increasing gains in literacy skills to aid the students in becoming fluent readers and writers in this 21st century.

Conclusion

In this section of the case study, I discussed the methodology used to collect the data. I also explained the population, sample, and ethical consideration in detail. I used a

qualitative case study to explore effective instructional strategies that should be used to teach students in poverty. This methodology is the best fit for the research under study. To research this topic, I collected multiple sources of data that included interviews and document reviews of lesson plans. I used the inductive approach to search for themes in the data. I established validity, reliability, and credibility of the data through triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking. I protected participants by using pseudonyms for confidentiality and I kept a research log.

Within Section 3 of this project study, I will discuss the PD program that I developed based on the findings of the study. In addition, I will discuss the description and goals, rationale, review of literature, implementation, and formative and summative evaluations of the project. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this project including positive social change.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore elementary teachers' use of instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty and learn what resources and support teachers needed to teach these students. The findings revealed teachers' perceptions of implementing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction for teaching students in poverty and their PD expectations. The study provides a variety of information that addressed all the research questions. The findings indicated that differentiated instruction and cooperative learning were effective for teaching students in poverty and were useful in all classrooms for effective teaching of literacy and all subjects. The findings also indicated that teachers need more PD in the writing of lesson plans to suit the needs of students in poverty and in developing activities to effectively teach students in bridging the literacy gap. The participants indicated that PD should be continuous and should be done on a one-on-one basis for its effectiveness. The participants suggested the need for the PD sessions to include development of lesson plans. The literacy coordinator will be modelling and using these plans inclusive of the different strategies to teachers. All participants emphasized the necessity of using technology to teach students in poverty. They all want PD training that includes multicultural or culturally responsive instructional practices.

Based on the findings of this research, I developed a 3-day PD workshop (see Appendix A) that is designed to assist with the current PD framework in which teachers at Hill Elementary are actively engaged. This additional PD workshop is entitled *Building*

Teacher Capacity Using Differentiated Instruction and Cooperative Learning Strategies to Improve Student Literacy hereafter referred to as Building Teacher Capacity.

Rationale

For this study, I explored elementary school teachers' perceptions and expectations of the use of effective instructional strategies to improve the literacy performance of students in poverty. The PD will provide teachers with how to use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies for teaching literacy to students in poverty. This project was selected based on the five themes and two subthemes developed from the research findings. The most dominant themes were Themes 2 and 5, the use of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction and the use of PD to improve teachers' skills in teaching students in poverty. The findings revealed that teachers need more PDs to teach students in poverty

Students in poverty are at varying levels of literacy, and this affects students' performance. The implementation of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies through PD is important for decreasing the low literacy performance of elementary students in poverty. The participants in the study stated that students in poverty are performing poorly in class and on standardized tests. The participants further stated that there is the need for more PD in cooperative learning and differentiated instruction for teachers to build their capacity and be better able to teach students in poverty in increasing their academic performance. Therefore, I realized there was the need for a 3-day PD workshop that could assist teachers in teaching students in poverty and those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Hence, the goal for this PD workshop is to

assist teachers to plan and deliver effective literacy lessons using cooperative learning and differentiated instruction. A second goal is to assist teachers in collaborating with other teachers using best practices so they can learn from each other. This training was created to empower and assist teachers in implementing the effective use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to teach students in poverty literacy instruction.

Review of the Literature

According to the findings from the study, I realized there was a need for PD, including cooperative learning and differentiated instruction strategies to teach students in poverty. Using these strategies will assist with greater improvement in students' performance in literacy. My focus is on a PD workshop, emphasizing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction strategies to improve teachers' knowledge and strengthening the use of these strategies in their classrooms. Prior to developing the PD workshop, I searched for research relevant to the findings of this study from 2014 to 2019. My search included the Walden library, Google scholar, Google, Education Research Complete, ERIC, SAGE Publication, and Thoreau Database. I searched for peer reviewed articles by searching for specific terms associated with my study. The terms used were *professional development*, *cooperative learning*, *differentiated instruction*, *teacher collaboration*, *adult learning*, *culturally responsive teaching*, and *multicultural literature*. This section is organized by the following topics: adult learning, professional development, professional development and differentiated instruction, professional

development and cooperative learning, teacher collaboration, culturally responsive teaching, and multicultural literature.

Adult Learning

According to adult learning theory, adults learn through experience (Knowles, 1980). Adult learners fail to be successful if they are not able to share their experiences (Kapur, 2015; Lillge, 2019). Adult learners engage in activities so that they can gain new knowledge and experiences. In adult learning through PD, the teachers are the first decision making body (Potolea & Toma, 2015). Teachers should be consulted before training is planned because they are the first professional training body in any institution. Potolea and Toma (2015) concluded that the success of educational strategies in schools is dependent on teachers as they are the ones who are relied on to make decisions about their own learning, source of learning, and the constant monitoring of their own progress. PD designed with adult learners in mind creates the opportunities for training to be professional and meaningful.

Adult learning involves increasing knowledge of adults and includes creating effective learning environments that are crucial for the increased academic performance of all students. According to Merriam and Bierema (2014), there are six stages of adult learning: (a) experience, (b) readiness to learn, (c) problem centered orientation, (d) learners' self-concept, (e) need-to-know, and (f) internal motivation. These six concepts, according to Merriam and Bierema, reflect the way adults develop higher levels of confidence by demonstrating what is learned.

The PD training will create opportunities for adult learners to improve their teaching skills and use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies effectively in their classrooms. The adult learners will also be able to use multicultural literature that is relevant to sharpen their teaching skills. The PD training will allow teachers to collaborate and use productive learning time to effectively plan for learners needs, which can yield effective results.

Professional Development

PD needs to be effective. For PD to be effective, it must address learners' needs, and it must be active, focused on the content, and centered on the goals of the teachers involved (Desimone & Garet, 2015). There are many benefits of effective PD. Owens, Pogodzinski, and Hill (2014) and Stewart (2014) pointed out that PD must be presented to adult learners in a way that is relevant to their daily work and must include opportunities for practice. When PD facilitates participation for teachers to share experiences they had in their classrooms, the experience proves most effective (see Babinski, Amendum, Knotek, Sánchez, & Malone, 2018). PD can enhance teachers' skills in providing specific skills for both teachers and learners (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; King, 2014). PD can be used to help teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators implement various methods to achieve specific learning goals (Allen & Green, 2015). PD is content focused and provides a clearer understanding of knowledge, instructional skills, and strategies (Mendoza, 2018). PD can increase the effect the teacher has on student learning and can also increase teachers' attitudes and skills in teaching and learning (King, 2014).

Popp and Goldman (2016) believed that the purpose of PD is to create the conditions under which sufficient levels of knowledge and skill are developed to sustain practice and to provide the conditions that support practice until educators and administrators have fully grasped the objective of the PD and knowledge has been achieved and transfer has occurred. The main purpose of PD is to guide professional practices and beliefs to bring about change in classroom instruction and in the attitudes of educators and administrators to ultimately improve student learning (Means, 2017). PD involving content specifically on curriculum is effective for supporting teacher learning in classroom contexts (Babinski et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this study, participants stated that differentiated instruction and cooperative learning are effective strategies for teaching students in poverty. PD training can be used to provide guidance for teachers in differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies.

Professional Development and Differentiated Instruction

PD that is focused on differentiated instruction is effective for improvement in teachers' abilities to implement strategies in the classroom for students in poverty (Bourini, 2015; Quintero & Hansen, 2017). There are various advantages of differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction (a) meets the needs of diverse students with a variety of learning styles, (b) accommodates students with learning disabilities and other types of disabilities, (c) facilitates language learning to students from different cultures such as English language learners, and (d) stimulates creativity and helps students understand ideas at higher levels of thinking (Cha & Ahn, 2014; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Dixon, Yssel, Connell, & Hardin, 2014; Hall, Strongman, & Meyer, 2014; van

Geel et al., 2019). Differentiated instruction is a complex teaching skill (Allen & Green, 2015; Deunk, Doolaard, Smale-Jacobse, & Bosker, 2015; Maulana, Helms-Lorenz, & van de Grift, 2015; Park & Datnow, 2017). According to Doubet and Hockett (2015, 2017) and Tomlinson, Brimijoin, and Narvaez (2008), differentiated instruction is as old as the craft of teaching and will never go out of style. Differentiation is a philosophy of and model for effective teaching and learning that goes beyond strategies. Differentiation is a potential response to regular and ongoing analysis of students' characteristics and students' learning. Differentiation calls for instructional adjustments that respond to patterns in student needs. Differentiation incorporates a range of instructional strategies, including whole-class instruction, and relies on flexible grouping for a variety of community-building and instructional purposes. Differentiation calls for respectful tasks that respond to students' readiness, interest, and learning preferences (Doubet & Hockett, 2015, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2008). Differentiation is for all grade levels and subjects (Doubet & Hockett, 2015, 2017; Tomlinson, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2008). PD that includes ample and modified differentiated instruction provides teachers with ample on-going support. Including differentiated instruction strategies in this PD can allow teachers to discover resources and strategies for modifying lessons to meet learner needs. This PD training can allow teachers to collaborate to plan lessons for different learning styles and to modify lessons.

Professional Development and Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is used to facilitate active learning among students.

Cooperative learning is a method in which students are asked to work together in

completing tasks given (see Aldosari, 2016; Basak & Yildiz, 2014). Cooperative learning strategies work well with students in poverty (see Baloch & Brody, 2017; Panhwar, Gopang, Zubair, & Baloch, 2017). Cooperative learning has a positive effect on student achievement, their motivation for learning, their critical thinking and problem-solving skills (see Baloch & Brody, 2017; Munir, Baroutian, Young, & Carter, 2018; Panhwar et al., 2017). Students who cooperate to facilitate their own learning perform better than those who do not (see Alvi & Gillies, 2015; Johnson & Johnson, 2017). Cooperative learning is effective for teaching students in many disciplines (see Aldosari, 2016; Artut & Bal, 2018). Cooperative learning is a strategy in which small teams with students of different levels of ability, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject (see Gul & Shehzad, 2015; Warfa, 2015). The goal of cooperative learning is for students to work together to reach a common goal (see Cox, 2018; van Dijk, Meyer, van Engen, & Loyd, 2017). For this PD, teachers will be shown how to use cooperative learning in small groups in their classroom to assist students in understanding the literacy concepts and for use in other disciplines. For this PD teachers will be empowered on how these strategies can improve students learning in their classrooms. Teachers will be given first- hand experience on how to successfully implement cooperative learning strategies in their classrooms. For this PD also teachers will learn cooperative learning strategies by participating in teams themselves.

Teacher Collaboration

This PD workshop will also provide the opportunities for teachers to collaborate. Collaboration is a way that teachers can share and interact with each other to promote

excellence in teaching and student learning. Researchers noted that collaboration is “critical to teacher development and school improvement” (Forte & Flores, 2014, p. 91). Through this PD when teachers collaborate their ideas and beliefs can be put together in one setting and used to improve students’ achievement and success. Mowat (2015) suggested that teachers’ opinions, beliefs, and perceptions about diverse low-SES students have a direct correlation on how effective teachers are when teaching low-income students from urban communities. Consequently, meaningful and purposeful PD must be cultivated and nurtured by teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators alike to produce a positive social change in the lives of diverse low-income urban students (Cha & Ahn, 2014; Toom, 2016). Thus, when teachers collaborate, they will be better able to discuss learners’ needs that are common to their classrooms and plan and share effective strategies to improve their academic performance.

Teacher collaboration reinforces teaching quality and assists in teaching quality; it also guards against challenges in teaching practices (Cha & Ahn, 2014; Prachee, 2017). Collaboration is an important component in education (Prachee, 2017; Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). Collaboration of teachers results in more opportunities for differentiation in lessons especially during small group discussions (see Vangrieken et al., 2015). When teachers collaborate their efforts and expertise are combined and teachers are provided with the opportunities to expand the meaning of different tasks that are presented (see Ciechanowski, 2014).

Collaboration is important because when administrators give teachers the opportunity to meet in collaborative groups, they can make sound academic decisions

that lead to student success (see Kitchen, Gray, & Jeurissen, 2016). When principals engage teachers in learning environments in which they can communicate with each other, work as a team, and have discussions about curriculum offerings or planning and delivery of lessons, they are able to exchange best practices that lead to student academic success (Hallam, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2016; Popp & Goldman, 2016). The involvement of administrators is imperative to collaborative groups because their involvement adds structure and independence to the collaborative group (Hallam, 2015). Teachers should be able to learn on the job with opportunities for collaboration and individualized support (Popp & Goldman, 2016). Hence, collaboration will be relevant for this PD workshop to ensure that teachers work together in garnering ideas about different cultures and students with different learning styles and how to better teach them.

Multicultural Education and Culturally Responsive Teaching

The participants wanted more PD related to incorporating multicultural resources within the curriculum. Using multicultural literature is effective for teaching students of different diversities (see Iwai, 2015; Kim, Wee, & Lee, 2015). Osorio (2018) concluded that multicultural literature promotes an appreciation for diversity and promotes students' social consciousness. Teachers use multicultural books to promote diversity within their classroom (see Iwai, 2015; Osorio, 2018; Peterson, Gunn, Brice, & Alley, 2015). For this PD multicultural literature text will be demonstrated to teachers on how to include all cultures within their classroom so that all learners will appreciate the learning environment.

Culturally responsive teaching is a means through which teachers can incorporate multicultural texts in the classroom. Gay (2013, 2015) defined culturally responsive teaching as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 50). Muñiz (2019) also stated that culturally responsive teaching is a kind of teaching that calls for engaging learners whose experiences and cultures are excluded from mainstream teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is important for students in poverty and those from low-SES and cultural backgrounds. Due to the increase in racial diversity in the student population, schools of education must train all teachers to be culturally responsive in their teaching. Cultural awareness and cultural responsiveness require an understanding of students’ cultural backgrounds, as well as factors that affect student performance to avoid racial issues, teacher biases, and racist teaching practices in the classroom (see Peters, Margolin, Fragnoli, & Bloom, 2016; Williams & Bryan, 2013). Participants in Peters et al.’s (2016) study expressed the need to learn more about cultural differences and understand students’ cultural backgrounds and home lives because they perceived home-life and customs as an important part of a child’s life that fuels a child’s personality. Peters et al. also suggested that teachers need to see the value of multicultural education and adapt their instructional methods and curriculum to meet a range of student needs as they endeavor to understand the effect of race on learning. Incorporating culturally responsive literature is also important for students from diverse culture literacy learning. Literature should be enjoyable to read and relevant to the lives of the students. Teachers need to model explicit instructional strategies for them to effectively integrate

multicultural literacy into their curriculum successfully (see James et al., 2016).

Culturally responsive teachings can also be used to strengthen relationships between teachers and their students. Gehlbach and Robinson (2016) stated that school administrators who advocate for equitable education for all students must continue to not only strive to diversify the teaching population, but to advocate for building repertoire between teachers and students.

Parental Involvement

A minor finding from the study was that participants thought that PD in parental involvement is necessary to build students' literacy skills. Hale (2015), Heinrichs (2018), and Pushor (2015a, 2015b) showed that parental engagement and involvement are necessary for student learning. Additionally, a chaotic household (e.g., lack of structure, crowding, high levels of environmental stimulation), which is positively related to income poverty, is a predominate factor that leads to students' low academic achievement (Garrett-Peters et al., 2016; Vernon-Feagans, Willoughby, & Garrett-Peters, 2016). When parents are engaged in their children's learning the more successful their children are academically (see Hale, 2015; Heinrichs, 2018). When school educators engage parents in children's learning their achievement greatly improves (Pushor, 2015a, 2015b). Constantino (2016) concluded that when teachers engage students as models in their lessons, parents see the need to become more involved. The involvement of the children further assist to improve parents' engagement in their children's learning and hence led to improved student academic achievement. When parents are engaged in their children's

education their children are more successful in school (see Schueler, 2014; Sukys, Dumciene, & Lapeniene, 2015).

The 3-day PD will include strategies that teachers can use to involve parents in student learning. Garrett-Peters et al. (2016) offered numerous approaches for working with impoverished children and their parents. Teachers should create positive classroom environments, focus on assets, instead of deficits, structure lessons and tasks meaningfully to reduce threats but pose a high challenge to students in their classrooms (Garrett-Peters et al., 2016). Garrett-Peters et al. also asserted the importance of designing effective forms of communication with families and integrating community resources. Compton (2016) suggested that teachers brainstorm strategies for getting parents involved in homework and curriculum planning for their children. In the PD, teachers could also be taught how to get parents involved by including student-led conferences in their classrooms and invite parents to participate and listen to their children explaining their learning (Constantino, 2016). It is important to teach teachers to build relationships with parents so that parents will be more engaged and interesting in their children's learning and development.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of effective instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty. There is a need for teachers to integrate the use of effective strategies in the classrooms to improve students' literacy performance. The use of PD that includes differentiated instruction, cooperative learning, teacher

collaboration, multicultural literature, culturally responsive teaching, and parental involvement can be effective for teaching students of poverty.

Project Description

This project will be a 3-day PD workshop designed to increase teachers' skills in teaching literacy. The PD will also involve the use of multicultural instruction for diverse learner. The PD will include teacher collaboration, integration of parental involvement, multicultural literacy pedagogy related to differentiated instruction and cooperative learning. The project will also provide administrators and literacy coaches with skills in cooperative learning and differentiated instruction. When teachers and administrators attend these workshops that are relevant to teaching students in poverty there can be changes in instructional methods, as well as teachers' self-efficacy, and a growth in mindset can occur that can lead to significant improvement in student literacy skills and overall academic achievement across all subject areas (see Hachfeld, Hahn, Schroeder, Anders, & Kunter, 2015). The PD will provide teachers with information about the effects of poverty on students' literacy learning. This PD will also provide information about the various misunderstandings that may exist between teachers and various ethnic groups. If students are to learn effectively the key lies in differentiation of curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of all learners regardless of ethnicity or cultural diversities.

There will be enough space in the room where the PD workshop will be held for participants to display group assignments. There will also be space to separate participants into small groups for team discussion. The room will have space for display of charts and work area for creating lesson plans, and games and activities will be used to

model strategies. I will be facilitating the PD along with the Regional literacy coordinator and the cluster-based literacy specialist. I along with the other presenters will offer methods of instruction and model grade appropriate lessons. We will also facilitate discussions on differentiated instruction and cooperative learning. Time will also be given for teachers to present and share activities and lessons that they create during the PD workshop with the whole group. The PD was designed to meet the outcomes of the study's findings

Resources and Supports

Some of the resources for this PD already exist within Hill Elementary. The materials such as multimedia-projector, computers, internet access, and classroom space, as well as the presenters, are already in place. The materials will allow for the effective implementation of the PD workshop. The principal will be responsible for meeting with the regional literacy coordinator to set the date and time for the PD sessions. My responsibility will be to assist with presentation of the differentiated instructional strategies through lesson planning. I will also be responsible for liaison with the MOE to get the computers connected to one network and have the internet working on all computers. The computers were presented to the school through a pilot project by the United States Agency for International Development for the implementation of the Jamaica's new National Standards Curriculum. They are stored in the multipurpose resource room at the school. Therefore, the cost to operate the PD will be fully funded, resulting in no cost to the researcher.

Potential Barriers

The only potential barrier I foresee at this time would be time to implement the workshops so that all teachers can attend. The MOE already has a schedule for PD days for the National Standards Curriculum implementation. However, this will not be such a barrier because administrators will be able to communicate with staff using the school and MOE scheduled calendar of events which is used to schedule PDs and activities throughout the school year to successfully include the 3-day PD for the term.

Another barrier could be resistance of teachers to attend the PD workshop if they think it will not be beneficial. This barrier can be addressed by communicating to teachers the goals of the workshops and the benefits they will receive that will assist them in better planning cooperative learning and differentiated instructional strategies for them to improve the academic achievement of literacy within the school and delivery of lessons to students.

Proposal for Implementation and Timeline

It is important that I communicate the plans for this PD workshop to the principal, regional coordinator, and other stakeholders in a timely manner. The project includes planning for a 3-day PD workshop based on the findings from my research. The presenters for the training session will be myself as a literacy specialist, the regional literacy coordinator, and the cluster-based literacy coordinator. We all will share best practices of implementing differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies into successfully teaching literacy to students in poverty to improve their academic performance. We will also plan and execute lessons using these strategies. This PD

workshop is slated to be in the first term of the new school year 2020 to 2021 for the period September, October, and November. The schedule of activities for the PD workshop will be as follows:

- First, I will meet with the principal to solicit permission for the PD training. I will share the findings from the study with the principal. Then I will ask permission and wait for the confirmation of the school as the venue for the PD training.
- I will meet with the principal and use the school and MOE calendars of events to set specific dates for the PD workshop.
- I will share the goals of the PD with the principal, also the staff members who will be present and inform the principal of the inclusion of the regional literacy coordinator and cluster-based literacy specialist who will be presenting.
- I will discuss lunch and break for participants and materials for the differentiated lesson plans and cooperative learning needed.
- I will then meet with the regional coordinator to ensure that all materials needed for the PD workshop, the modelling of lesson plans, and technology are in place.
- I will ask the principal to reserve the computer lab for the PD sessions.
- A daily register will be created for participants to sign as proof of attendance to the sessions.

- A list of email addresses will be collected to remind participants of dates of sessions.
- Finally, I will provide an evaluation instrument to gather feedback from participants based on sessions, feedback and suggestions for improving future PDs.

The suggested time for the completion of this PD workshop is slated for over a term between September, October, and November of the first term of the new school year 2020 to 2021. Those new to the field will be trained at the beginning of the first term. The MOE schedules training for new teachers coming from college, so these teachers will be included in the PD training for the cluster. They will be trained within the first cluster-based training workshop at the beginning of the new school year.

Roles and Responsibilities of Students and Others

My role as the researcher will be to successfully plan how to implement the PD workshop with teachers. I will be responsible for presenting the strategies to the teachers. I will also be responsible for making sure all materials are in place and the regional coordinator and cluster-based literacy specialist are kept abreast with dates and sessions for the 3-day PD workshop. The role of the cluster-based literacy specialist is to model lesson plans using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to teach students in poverty effectively, also to assist teachers in integrating these strategies across all subject areas. The role of the principal is to be present to see teachers in action planning and delivering lessons using strategies presented for teaching literacy to students in poverty.

Project Evaluation Plan

This PD workshop will be evaluated through formal evaluation using a prepared evaluation form. The PD sessions will also be evaluated through summative evaluation. Formative evaluations will provide constructive feedback. This formative feedback will be used to measure the effectiveness of the program and its contents on an ongoing basis. The formative evaluation will be used to monitor participants' learning, skills, strategies presented and how much participants are actively engaged in the sessions presented (see Appendix A). The summative evaluation will be used to measure if the goals of the PD sessions were met by participants. The goal of each session will be evaluated using a formative evaluation instrument prepared by researcher. The results of these formative evaluation can be used to assess strengths and weaknesses, growth, opportunities, support and suggestion for future growth and development. To successfully implement a PD involving cooperative learning and differentiated instruction, the formative evaluation is designed to assist administrators in placing specific emphasis on needed changes and modifications to assist teachers of students in poverty to better teach literacy. The success of the PD will be how teachers integrate differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies into teaching literacy instruction to students in poverty.

Project Implications

Local Community

Based on the findings from the study teachers use cooperative learning and differentiated instructions in their classrooms as best practices for teaching students in poverty. There are many local and far reaching implications for social change in

implementing this project. Some implications include collaboration, integration, peer teaching, creating more PD across curriculum, and boosting teachers' confidence in implementing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in their classrooms. One implication for this project will be that teachers will develop the skills and best practices of writing lesson plans suitable for teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds by using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies including multicultural literacy text that include all students. With the tools provided through the PD training, teachers will also be able to help students in poverty increase their literacy performance and improve their academic achievement on both local and standardized tests.

Teachers will be able to collaborate in planning lessons in a cluster-based format which will significantly assist all students in improving academic performance overall. In collaborating with each other, teachers will greatly assist with the new National Standards Curriculum. In using the National Standards Curriculum teachers will be able to improve students' critical thinking skills, by engaging them in questions of higher order thinking. The teacher will be able to better integrate the use of the Five Es (Explore, Elaborate, Evaluate, Engage, and Explain) and four Cs (Creativity, collaboration, communication and Critical thinking; National Standards Curriculum, 2017) in planning better levels which will greatly affect a wider variety of students.

Greater improvement can also be seen in the academic performance of these children on the new Primary Exit Profile exam. This is the exam that is done in Jamaican primary school which begins at Grade 4 with literacy and numeracy, Grade 5 with the

abilities test, and Grade 6 with the curriculum test. The Primary Exit Profile exam is where social studies, science, mathematics, and language arts are tested based on teaching from the curriculum. This exam is the final exam that qualifies students to move into high schools in Jamaica. Teachers who attend the PD workshop will learn to differentiate assessments and lessons for the students they teach daily.

Lesson plans developed during the PD workshop can also be shared with other teachers online. The Jamaica Teachers Association has an online platform called share my lesson plan. This is where the plans will be shared with other teachers. This platform can be used to assist other teachers in differentiating and integrating cooperative learning strategies into their lessons for greater improvement in academic performance in literacy and across all subject areas, which is also a far-reaching implication.

Far Reaching

The PD workshop can have implications in other regions in Jamaica in that these best practices can be shared with other regions to affect literacy teaching. The information could help to build teachers' confidence in differentiating lessons for teaching students in poverty. Similar PD workshops can also be conducted in other regions and neighboring schools to integrate differentiated instruction and cooperative learning to better equip teachers in planning more effective lessons. These PD workshops could serve as best practices to assist teachers in integrating differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their lessons so that their students can be far more academically successful in literacy and in all subject areas. This study can affect all regions in increasing their awareness of the effective use of differentiated instruction and

cooperative learning strategies for teaching literacy to all students regardless of their diversities.

Conclusion

The 3-day PD workshop was developed to assist teachers in integrating the use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to teach literacy to students in poverty. The PD workshop was planned for teachers to garner new knowledge and skills of differentiating instruction and cooperative learning skills suitable for teaching students in poverty and those from low SES. Using these strategies can lead to improvement in academic achievement in the long term. PD workshops assist in teacher collaboration, integration of lessons, and reflection on best practices so that they can modify their skills and strategies to suit the needs of all learners. Students in poverty will benefit greatly as more current research-based approaches are used to meet their needs. The principals will benefit from the new approaches in that they will be able to get a first-hand look at teachers delivering the approaches to the students in the school. This 3-day PD workshop was developed as a result of the data gathered from document review of lesson plans and the interview transcriptions to assist teachers of students in poverty to improve their literacy skills. In Section 4, I will present my reflections and conclusions, scholarship, project development, leadership and social change, projects strengths and conclusion.

Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

Project Strengths and Limitations

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the effective instructional strategies that teachers at Hill Elementary were using to teach students in poverty and what additional support they needed to improve the performance of their students. Based on the findings of the research, I developed a 3-day PD workshop. In this section, I will present the strengths and limitations of the processes of implementing a PD workshop that will be beneficial to teachers, administrators, and parents to close the literacy achievement gap for students in poverty. I will also discuss the project strengths and limitations; recommendations for alternative approaches; scholarship, project development, leadership, and change; reflection on the importance of the work; and implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Projects Strengths

There are many strengths of this project. The first strength of this project is that it is specifically designed to address the literacy needs of students in poverty, using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies. Secondly, this PD workshop was developed based on the findings from the study that were based on teacher interview responses and the lessons plans that were collected. This project study can be beneficial to teachers because teachers will be given the opportunity to reflect on what they think will be of great assistance in helping them to succeed. This PD is beneficial in providing needed opportunities for teachers to collaborate with the school district and share best practices that can enhance students' literacy skills and improvement in their academic

success. This PD workshop will also allow teachers to develop cooperative learning and differentiated instruction reading strategies to assist students in becoming successful learners and become more competent and effective teachers. This needed change in practice as a result of the PD could result in more research-based strategies being implemented by teachers that meet the needs of all learners in inclusive classrooms. This PD workshop can also be used to encourage teachers to becoming more sensitive to students from multicultural and diverse cultures in providing suitable instruction to meet their needs and hence improving the academic performance of all students. Finally, this PD workshop could be used as a best practice to involve other clusters and parishes. Clusters and parishes are where many schools within the same district are placed together to collaborate with each other. This PD workshop can be used to enhance and improve the delivery of literacy and other subjects with the new curriculum.

Limitations

The main objective for developing the 3-day workshop is to assist novice teachers and veteran teachers with needed training to improve their method of delivery and to modify their practices in preparing differentiated and cooperative learning instructional strategies for teaching literacy to students in poverty. However, there are limitations to the project. One limitation is that this PD workshop is minimal in relating to this problem of poverty as this PD only addresses two strategies to assist teachers in better imparting literacy lessons. The second limitation is that teachers may not have the time or might be reluctant to participate in the PD workshop because they do not know what it is about. A solution to this would be to educate teachers on the benefits through the school

administrator. The administrator could schedule a meeting to discuss the goals, components, and benefits of the PD workshop so that teachers can buy into the benefits to be gained from the workshop. To foster and strengthen the meeting, the administrator can also bring into the meeting the coordinator of literacy to model a lesson using cooperative learning and differentiated instruction to concretize the teachers' confidence in the importance of the PD. Another limitation is that it may be difficult to find a teacher at the school to lead the PD. This can be eliminated by choosing a teacher who is interested in getting the training in the PD and wants to participate.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Another approach to this project could be to develop a culturally responsive 9-week curriculum involving the use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies. This curriculum of best practices could be used by teachers within their classrooms. The use of parental involvement could also be a part of this curriculum to improve student's literacy learning and involving parents at all levels.

Future research could be done to investigate the effect of culturally responsive pedagogy on students' literacy achievement. Research could be done to investigate the use of culturally relevant pedagogy on teacher's self-efficacy after the implementation of culturally relevant instruction after many years. Also, a policy paper could be presented based on the findings from the research as a recommendation for future practices. This policy paper could be used to guide all stakeholders on the strategies to be used for literacy improvement of students in poverty.

This PD workshop could be extended to meet the needs of teachers globally. YouTube videos could be produced and saved online for teachers to access globally. This could be another way of delivering the PD. The videos could be done by professionals who would discuss the use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies instruction and definition. These videos could be interactive in which participants are able to participate and practice aspects of the workshop. This could be done in teams or individually. Materials could be provided for teachers during the video presentation. This PD can also be presented as a Cyber lesson, which could be evaluated using blogs online. YouTube is another form in which the PD could be presented to teachers,

During the interactive section, the teachers would be given time to share with each other what they have learned. Also, for the blog section, the teachers would be sharing blogs online about what they have learned. Then teachers would be given an evaluation form to provide feedback on its effectiveness, strengths, weaknesses, or recommendations for improvement.

Another approach could be to conduct more research on how to get parents more involved in their children's learning. This research could be expanded to other schools in the district to gain a broader perspective of how teachers and administrators view parental involvement in teaching and learning. This could also involve perceptions of using an intense PD with a focus on culturally responsive teaching instructional strategies inclusive of an additional multicultural curriculum to address the needs of diverse children living in poverty in closing the gap in literacy skills.

Scholarship

This project study has been an eye opener. I have had the opportunity of learning and engaging in a plethora of information about being a scholar practitioner and researcher. I have learned how the use of cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, and the involvement of parents in their children's education can affect the literacy learning of students in poverty. This project afforded me the opportunity to grow and learn as a researcher. As an adult learner, I learn by doing and reflecting, researching, and making synthesis of research. In addition, I learn from research read on the practice of using cooperative learning and differentiated instruction to teach literacy to students in poverty to improve their academic performance on both local and standardized tests. The literature review provided needed information that was of great benefit in informing the project study. I also read peer-reviewed literature, which involves the collaboration of teachers implementing differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their classrooms to students from diverse cultural backgrounds. The literature provided an in-depth insight into how these strategies are implemented and used in classrooms with students from poverty. I also learned how other teachers see differentiation of all students. Reading the literature helped me to be more accommodating with teachers who use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their classroom as the strategies are very time consuming and in depth.

Based on the findings from the study I developed a 3-day PD workshop on the effective use of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction for teaching students in poverty literacy instruction. This project study has challenged me to go deeper into

research to broaden my scope of knowledge, think far beyond my limited educational knowledge, and be able to think analytically and critically to make sense of research presented. As a result of this scholarly process my practical skills have been widened on research presented so that I will be able to critically analyze and make sense of research presented. The scholarly process afforded me the opportunity to gain practical skills about how valuable and effective classroom teachers are and the effectiveness of PD in the framework of the learning community.

My knowledge of scholarship emerged from looking through the lens of teachers and principals in how they perceive effective PD. As a result of my scholarly research I will do a project development of a 3- day PD workshop which is intended on providing teachers with evidence based instructional strategies of using cooperative learning and differentiated instructional strategies for teaching students in poverty. This workshop has the potential to equip teachers with effective skills for teaching students of poverty literacy instruction and has the potential of closing the gap of low literacy of these students.

Project Development and Evaluation

In developing the project, I learned that to develop an effective project it takes quality time. In planning differentiated instruction and cooperative learning lesson plans it takes many hours of research especially because there is a set curriculum designed by the MOE for all learners. In planning for students, I must align the lesson to the curriculum standards. The project development involved examples of how to include multicultural literature as well as strategies to involve parents in the learning process. I

must take into consideration the many ways in which teachers plan for teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds and the experiences the students bring to the learning environment. My intention is to assist students in poverty who are from diverse cultures become more proficient readers and writers. My intention also is to provide support for the elementary school located in a deep rural area to narrow the gap in literacy skills that plague the school and community and the wider society. A major task in developing this project was to ensure that all materials, space, laptops, tables, an area for lunch and break for teachers are available. Teachers will also collaborate in groups to develop lesson plans including cooperative learning and differentiated instructional strategies to meet the needs of learners in poverty. I worked assiduously in developing a project which is designed to allow teachers to collaborate with their team members as I provide the opportunity for needed support.

The most significant aspect of project development is to ensure that quality time is scheduled for teachers to share with other colleagues, model the strategies being taught and locating needed resources. I also learned that adults learn in different ways from students so to keep students focused I need to provide activities to keep the students attentive. I used the themes, data collected and the findings of the study as a guide in developing this project. For the project I had to create an evaluation form which contains open ended questions that will gather feedback from participants based on strengths, weaknesses, and recommendations based on teachers' perceptions of the implementation of these strategies. The implementation of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning instructional strategies will be used for meeting the literacy needs of students in

poverty. The PD workshop was created to meet the literacy needs of students in poverty. I endeavor to continue learning new skills and strategies to meet the needs of 21st century learners and be a life-long learner. In my quest to continue to learn and develop new skills I will continue to empower other teachers within the school district and throughout the country using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to make a difference in literacy learning and performance.

Leadership and Change

I believe that true leaders are born they are not made. I also believe that true leaders seek to teach others how to lead effectively. A true leader leads by example and will lead to effect needed changes in the learning community. When leaders are effective, they usually quickly recognize problems and work with alacrity in solving them. Leaders who are effective create positive learning environments which foster learning for students, parents, families, educators, teachers, and administrators so that they feel valued by their peers. As I venture further my intention is to continue to learn and build on my expertise as a lifelong learner in creating positive and meaningful learning environments that build students learning outcomes and experiences that will empower them to be 21st century learners. I have had a plethora of learning experiences at Walden University and my penchant for the experience taught me how to support my thoughts and ideas with the input of literature. As a leader I learned to listen to my mentors at Walden University to help me develop a purposeful and meaningful PD which has the potential to effect change in the lives of the participants learning and teaching experiences.

Reflection on Importance of the Work

The proposed project study is a 3-day PD workshop which is specifically designed for teachers teaching literacy instruction to students in poverty. My vision for this PD is to support scholars and practitioners in striving towards achieving better results of literacy from students in poverty. I believe if this PD project is used appropriately it will make a difference in the lives of all children from poverty. Teachers and administrators must have to first commit to using this PD project to improve teachers' instructional strategies and their self-esteem. The PD is designed for students from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is important for teachers to participate in these PD workshops as it will allow them to create effective lesson plans and activities geared to teach students of poverty literacy instruction. The project is also important because it allows teachers to collaborate with other colleagues. When teachers attend the PD sessions this will assist them in being better able to develop effective and efficient teaching practices which will improve students' performance. Based on participants responses from the interview it was evident that teachers attended professional development using cooperative learning and differentiated instruction however they responded that more training needs to be done on a one-on-one basis and collaboratively for them to efficiently teach literacy to students in poverty. For teachers to effectively teach literacy to students in poverty for improvement they will be trained through the PDs to effectively use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning to effect the needed change in literacy learning. As I reflect on the project study, I believe strongly that elementary school teachers need this PD study. Before teachers can teach these students

of poverty, they must address the needs of these students. Students are more likely to succeed academically if they feel they are valued by their teachers and their peers.

Doing this research was an opportunity for me to learn and implement the research process. I was afforded the knowledge of being more appreciative of others and I also learned that children come from different cultures, environments, and socioeconomic backgrounds. I learned to appreciate that students learn differently and no one size fit all approach will work with these students. I learned that every child is an individual and must be treated uniquely. I also learned that in planning instruction teachers need to cater to the needs of all learners. This project was developed to provide teaching approaches to foster and enrich the classroom experience of all learners regardless of their race, cultural, or linguistic backgrounds. It is imperative to note as an educator that neither teaching nor learning is a single process both works hand in hand. Therefore, it is important that teachers differentiate and use cooperative learning in the classrooms, as well as incorporate multicultural materials and strengthen parental involvement, which are appropriate for all kinds of learners, learning styles, intelligences, and interests.

Analysis of Self as A Scholar

Being a doctoral candidate at Walden University offers me the opportunity to grow and learn as a professional. I not only grew as a professional, but also as a scholarly writer. My understanding of doing qualitative research has been widened and my capacity to conduct a qualitative case study extended. My journey on this doctoral study has had leaps and bounds. There were many instances in my study that I had to depend on

my chair for her advice and expertise in developing this project. From different coursework I have learned how to negotiate and identify a researchable problem, locate relevant sources, and analyze peer-viewed literature relevant to the topic. I also learned how to develop questions that are needed for collecting data and analyzing. My coursework and the materials provided by Walden gave me the skills and knowledge needed to collect, analyze and make sense of data collected. As a result of undertaking this project study I got a chance to learn new strategies, ideas, sources, and skills that can be used to successfully implement differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in a diverse classroom. The changes that teachers of students in poverty can add to the classroom can result in improved learning across curriculum and other subject areas. Implementing the strategies provided in the PD workshop can bring about effective and efficient teaching and learning which can in turn result in improved student progress.

The implementation of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction can result in student centered learning and independent learning environments. This project has the potential to improve teacher's readiness for teaching students in poverty to address the varying learning needs of students from poverty who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. The information presented in this project can improve students' success in literacy and other subjects hence making teachers more effective.

This doctoral study has helped me to develop my research and writing skills to be able to effectively research a topic in education. As a result, I have earned the respect of others and have learned to respect myself as a researcher and a professional scholar. I have studied and acquired the skills and expertise to be called a doctoral scholar.

Analysis of Self as a Project Developer

In developing a project there are many skills to be learned, and strategies to adopt. As a project developer I have learned many new approaches which are necessary for developing an effective project. Doing this project, I needed to be able to develop effective educational best practices that work best for teachers who teach students in poverty who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. Being a novice, who never developed a project study before I was daunted by the task in developing a project study of this magnitude. However, I needed to bear in mind the urgency and value of the project study to principals and teachers in Hill Elementary to improve the literacy skills of students in poverty. I used the project study to help me to develop as a scholarly researcher. As a project developer, I searched for and tried to create a research-based projects which will assist teachers in their professional growth. The research for this study involves teachers learning how to effectively use cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in their planning and delivery of lessons to students of poverty. As a result of conducting and planning this project study I can improve the quality of my teaching and that of teachers within Hill Elementary. The experience developing this project was bittersweet. Bitter in that it was my first experience and at first, I felt totally out of it, I was overly stressed and worried about the direction to take. However, with the able direction of my chair Dr. Alkins I was able to overcome that challenge. She assisted in boosting my confidence. The sweet experience was that once I got an understanding of what was expected I totally enjoyed the process. This resulted in an overwhelming boost to my self-confidence.

Analysis of Self as a Practitioner

As a practitioner I was able to identify a project at the local school level that affected students' performance. My journey at Walden University was tedious as I ventured through locating literature which is relevant to the problem identified. The rigor through the literature review taught me how to synthesize literature, and critically analyze it from the perspective of the writer. As a practitioner I am now equipped with the basic skills of conducting a research based on a given problem. I can also successfully guide future students doing smaller studies. In conducting this study, I will be able to plan and share a PD workshop developed by me to other teachers and administrators. I also plan for promoting social change as I maneuver the odds to uncover new knowledge and skills to enhance my role as a leader.

The goal of this project is that Hill Elementary students will achieve better results if the teachers implement what they learn from the PD. If teachers transfer their learning based on the PD it could lead to improvement in students learning and on standardized and local literacy test, and in turn teachers will feel a sense of accomplishment, more valued and respected by leadership in the learning community. As an educator I feel a sense of comfort, in being able to provide my colleagues with strategies and information to help them teach effectively, targeting all learners regardless of their diversities and learning styles in becoming proficient literacy learners. I am also comforted that cooperative learning and differentiated instruction will be used as strategies to improve academic achievement of all learners.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

We live in an ever-changing world in which education is not static, it is dynamic. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to keep a breast with global changes in education. Teachers need to learn new and innovative ways to use differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their classrooms that will be supportive of all learners. The continuation of learning as educators is imperative that educators grow and learn to equip themselves with the skills and tools needed to meet the needs of all learners. Implementation of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in classroom has become a global topic in almost all hemispheres as students in poverty who are diverse learners exist at the local and global level.

Potential Impact for Social Change

Local level. To address social change at the local level, educators need to learn new skills and strategies that are geared towards improvement in student learning. Social change will affect the local level when there is improvement in students in poverty literacy scores at Hill Elementary. Teachers will feel some form of accomplishment when there is vast improvement in the literacy scores of all students at Hill Elementary. Teachers at Hill Elementary will also become more connected to students and to the teaching learning environment. The project has the potential to benefit all stakeholder within the school community. It will also benefit the MOE in that teachers within the school will be more equipped to teach students of poverty and these best practices can be shared among other teachers. This project has the potential to increase teachers' self -

esteem and student performance. If students feel more appreciated by their teachers, they will be motivated to perform better and work harder in improving their literacy skills.

Societal level. Outside of the local level, the PD components can be used to assist other professionals in implementing the use of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in their classrooms to effectively teach students in poverty literacy instruction. Implementing this project study will assist other teachers across the island of Jamaica to implement successful use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies in their classroom to improve literacy learning of students in poverty.

Applications and Directions for Future Research

One way of assisting new teachers would be through peer teaching where these teachers will be provided with a clearer understanding of implementing differentiated instruction and cooperative learning in their methodology to teach students in poverty who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. Future researchers could investigate the effectiveness of the PD sessions for teachers of students in poverty. Future research can also include comprehension strategies that are effective for teaching students from poverty and include culturally responsive methodology to teach these students.

This project study focused solely on the instructional practices used by teachers at Hill Elementary and may not be generalizable to a wider population. To strengthen the study findings additional research could be done to include other schools within the parish and a larger sample of schools to add validity to the findings to gain a broader perspective of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to teach students in poverty in closing the literacy gap.

Future research on the topic can be done to include parents as important stakeholders in the teaching and learning process using surveys and/or interviews to learn better strategies for involving the parents of impoverished students in the education of their children. Additional research could be done to investigate the effect of parental involvement and the culturally responsive teaching on literacy achievement.

Conclusion

In Section 4 of this project study, I reflected on the project study, the strengths, the limitations, the implications, and the recommendations for future research. Furthermore, I included an analysis of what I learned throughout the process about scholarship, project development, and the potential to effect social change in the field of education. In the process of conducting this project study I was able to grow into a scholarly research project developer. I have a recent appreciation for the resolute determination and scholarship of researchers in the field of education.

The project study was developed to explore the needs, perceptions, and learning experiences of educators regarding improving the instructional skills of teachers who teach literacy skills to students in poverty. I learned that listening to the needs of the teachers in the school will help to resolve the issues of teaching literacy to students in poverty most effectively. The study was based on the use of effective instructional strategies that teachers are using to teach students in poverty literacy instruction. Based on the findings from the study a PD workshop was developed for implementing cooperative learning and differentiated instruction for teaching students in poverty. The project study should be beneficial to all stakeholders in the learning community.

I want teachers to grasp the skills of using effective strategies for teaching students in poverty and understand how to integrate strategies in their lesson plan effectively to capture the attention of all students so that academic achievement can improve. I also want teachers to include parents in the teaching and learning process to garner student success. I will continue to empower other teachers in developing an understanding of how to implement cooperative learning and differentiated instruction in their classrooms to improve literacy instruction. Because it is important to incorporate effective strategies in planning lessons to meet the needs of students from poverty who are from diverse social and cultural backgrounds.

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Appendix A: Professional Development Workshop

Building Teacher Capacity Using Differentiated Instruction and Cooperative Learning strategies to Improve Student Literacy

This project is planned as a useful way of implementing the use of differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to improve literacy of students in poverty. The learning environment involved for this project study reflects a multicultural image. For many decades low literacy rates has been the hallmark of the community. One of the goals of the Jamaican Ministry of Education (MOE) is to increase the literacy levels of all learners regardless of ethnicity or SES. I learned from this project that the Jamaican government has responded to the low literacy rates among students in poverty by providing different programs to assist these learners. The findings from the study indicated that all teachers and principals see professional development (PD) trainings as supportive in increasing the teachers' personal knowledge and skill development in instructing students in poverty in literacy content. The PD training sessions are based on the findings from the study of teacher's use of effective instructional strategies for teaching study in poverty. The findings also indicated that PD trainings could work more effectively on increasing student's literacy skills. If the teachers had more time to collaborate one-on-one, then teaching would be more effective. The results of the study indicated the need for PD focusing on effective instructional strategies for teachers teaching students in poverty and to better involve parents in their children's education. The 3-day PD workshop will also involve the use of multicultural instruction for diverse learner. The PD will include teacher collaboration, integration of parental involvement strategies, and multicultural literacy pedagogy related to differentiated instruction and

cooperative learning. The PD will also include creating resources, lessons, hands-on activities to increase the academic performance of students in poverty.

Purpose

The purpose of the PD is to address the perceptions and needs of the elementary school teachers and administrators through differentiated instruction and cooperative learning instructional strategies to narrow the gap in literacy skills of students in poverty. This PD workshop is useful for addressing the lack of literacy skills in a deep rural elementary school and increasing educators' knowledge related to literacy instruction, and it has the potential to prepare teachers to teach more effectively in equipping students with the necessary skills to increase literacy performance on standardized test thereby becoming more proficient readers in the 21st century.

Target Audience

The targeted audience for this project will involve elementary school teachers within the target school from Grades 1 to 6.

Professional Development Training Schedule

The project will be inclusive of three sessions for the PD Training. The training sessions will last over a 3-day period. The sessions will begin at 8:30 a.m. and end at 3:30 p.m. for each of the 3 days. The audience can be widened to include other teachers from neighboring schools who saw the need for PD in instructional strategies to teach students in poverty literacy instruction.

Professional Development Goals

1. Educate teachers of students in poverty about differentiated instruction and cooperative learning use in their classrooms.
2. Provide teachers with the skills necessary to implement differentiated instruction and cooperative learning instruction to teachers who teach students in poverty literacy instruction. I will provide teachers with strategies to better involve parents in instruction.
3. Encourage collaboration of teachers for planning of lesson plans that can be used to demonstrate the use of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction implementations
4. As a result of attending the PD sessions teachers of students in poverty will be able to model the components of cooperative learning and differentiated instruction and integrate multicultural literature to teach students in poverty literacy instruction.

Day 1: Reaching Diverse students through differentiated lesson Planning

Materials:

- Chart paper
- Folders
- Pens
- Pencils
- Markers
- Note pads (sticky)
- Laptops
- Printer
- White board

Time Schedule for Day 1 Activities:

Time	Activities
8:30-9:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration/Devotion/Welcome/Introduction • All teachers will gather in the school computer room. A folder will be provided for persons to sign in. • Then each participant will be directed to breakfast in the dining room. (Lunch and snacks will be provided by MOE and school canteen).
9:00- 9:45 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The session will begin with introduction of all participants. Name tags will be given to all participants. This will be done so that presenters will learn the names of all participants before the 3-day sessions end. • The session will then begin with an appropriate icebreaker designed to pull on teachers' knowledge of differentiation. (See PowerPoint Slides 1–5) • Questions will be posed to teachers, e.g., Why differentiation? Why do teachers need to differentiate teaching/learning/assessment/activities for learners (Tomlinson, 2015)? Why do teachers use cooperative learning? These questions will be projected and required that teachers write their answer on post-it paper to be added to the chart in the room. (Slides 6-17)
9:45-10:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will view a video on differentiated classroom. Examples of possible videos: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated Instruction: Why, How, and Examples (Teachings in Education, 2017)., • Why differentiated classroom?

- Why cooperative learning? (Cambodia, 2016)
 - Teachers will discuss differentiated assessment.
 - Teachers will share questions about the video.
- 10:30-10:45 a.m. Break and snack
- 10:45-11:30 a.m.
- The literacy coordinator will share rich experiences about the implementation of differentiated instructional strategies and cooperative learning for students in poverty including multicultural pedagogy (e.g., The Resource Teacher telling success story from her classroom, Principal giving success story of record achievement).
 - The facilitator will then revisit teachers' views on the post it notes
- 11:30a.m.-12:30 p.m. Lunch
- 12:30-1:15 p.m.
- Presenter will present a lesson plan on reading using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies. (Potential source: <https://www.teacher.org/lesson-plan/collaborative-discussion/>)
 - Participants will be encouraged to ask questions as they make connections to modelling of the lesson plans.
 - Copies of the plans will be distributed to all participants to be used in their own classroom as guides.
- 1:15-2:00 p.m.
- Presenter will demonstrate how the internet can be a useful tool for teachers when locating activities and lesson plans in reading using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning.
 - Think Pair Share activity will be done by participants who are required to research activities then share with other colleagues on cooperative learning and differentiated lesson plan and activities (Allen Simon, n.d.).
- 2:00-2:45 p.m.
- All participants will gather in the big group to have discussion and share activities on differentiated instruction and cooperative learning activities. The post-it notes will be discussed and clarifications made.
- 2:45-3:00 p.m.
- Teachers will present what they found on differentiation and cooperative learning. Then they will proceed to sign out for Day 1
 - Reflection and wrap up.

Day 2: The Use of Differentiated and Cooperative Learning in Diverse Classroom

Materials:

- Folders
- Pens
- Pencils
- Laptops
- Printer
- Plain paper
- Chart paper
- Post it
- Markers/ highlighters
- Binders scissors crayons

Time Schedule for Day 2 Activities:

Time	Activities
8:30-9:00 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration/ Devotion/Welcome • The participants will go to breakfast
9:00-9:45 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cluster-based literacy coordinator will present examples of lessons successfully implemented using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning to teach students in poverty literacy instruction. • The Model for Differentiation of Instruction. Potential source: Differentiation strategies and examples: K-3. Retrieved from https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/training/access_differentiation_handbook_3-5.pdf • Then proceed to next session
9:45-10:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presenter will model a lesson using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning strategies to successfully teach students in poverty who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. (See Sample Lesson Plan) • Many copies will be prepared for all teachers.
10:30-10:45 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break and snack
10:45-11:30 a.m.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers will review presentations and then prepare a list of differentiated and cooperative learning activities based on their grade level these will be placed in folders for future reference.

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. | • Lunch |
| 12:30- 1:15 p.m. | • Teacher will look at forming formative assessment using cooperative learning and differentiated instructional strategies. |
| 1:15- 2:00 p.m. | • Developing assessment tasks. They will use objectives from the lesson plans to form assessment tasks. |
| 2:00-2:45 p.m. | • Teachers will select a specific task in groups and create a lesson plan using differentiated instruction and cooperative learning for students in poverty. |
| 2:45-3:00 p.m. | • Teacher use the given format to write and develop plan. |
| | • These will be presented then place on display in room. |
| 2:00-2:45 p.m. | • Teacher will check lesson plans for the learning styles such as use of ICT, flexible grouping, and mixed ability grouping, small group instruction. |
| 2:45-3:00 p.m. | • One group will share plan developed. |
| | • Reflection and wrap up. |

Day 3: Using Differentiated and Cooperative Learning to Teach in Classroom

Materials:

- Folders
- Glue
- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Paperclips
- Staples
- Plain sheets of paper
- Colored sheets of paper
- Whiteboard
- Laptops
- Printer

Time schedule for Day 3 of Activities:

Time	Activities
8:30-9:00 a.m.	• Devotion/ Registration/Breakfast

- 9:00-9:45 00 a.m.
- The literacy coordinator will review with teachers several examples of differentiated and cooperative learning strategies in whole group settings.
 - Teachers will be asked to share strategies that they are currently implementing in their classrooms to meet student's needs.
 - Teachers will also share best practices of what works within their classes.
- 9:45-10:30 a.m.
- Teachers will be asked to plan lessons for different grades in other subject area using cooperative learning and differentiated strategies.
 - The lessons that were created the previous day will be shared by teachers so that facilitator will make amendments and corrections.
 - Teachers will give suggestions of hands-on activities that can be used in learning stations.
- 10:30-10:45 a.m.
- Break and snack
- 10:45-11:30 a.m.
- Teachers will be shown a model lesson plan of how to use multicultural literature in lesson to create to diversities within their classrooms
 - The plans will be printed and given to each participant to put in their folders for future reference.
- 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
- Lunch
- 12:30-1:15 p.m.
- Participants will be placed in groups to plan a lesson.
 - The facilitator will provide each group with a lesson plan template.
 - Participants will work as a team to write a working lesson plan that would be relevant and useful in the general classroom.
 - Each lesson plan will incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies and multicultural resources.
 - Participants will be encouraged to use the internet to locate culturally responsive teaching websites and multicultural literature.
- 1:15- 2:00 p.m.
- Participants will be taught how to involve parents in their classroom using resource provided. (Show PowerPoint Slides 19-23)
- 2:00-2:45 p.m.
- Participants will share in groups plans presented
- 2:45-3:00 p.m.
- Meet in large group. Do Evaluation of the 3 days. (See Evaluation Form below.)

- Collect evaluation forms.
- Ask for participants to write a short reflection on workshop.
- Do Recap.
- Depart.

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Power point Presentation Slides

Slide#1

WHY DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION?

Classrooms are filled with students who:



have different needs

come from different educational backgrounds

have different attention spans and interests

have different language abilities

have different cultural backgrounds

Slide #2

Reaching Diverse students through differentiated lesson Planning

What is differentiated instruction?

- How do teachers differentiate instruction?
- How do teachers prepare their students and their classrooms for differentiated instruction?
- What does differentiated instruction look like in the classroom
- Why do teachers use cooperative learning?
- Why do teachers use cooperative learning?

Slide #3

Differentiated instruction defined

1. Differentiated instruction (DI) is an approach whereby teachers adjust their curriculum and instruction to maximize the learning of all students.
2. Carol Ann Tomlinson is a key researcher and advocate for DI.
3. A teacher gradually shifts into providing a DI classroom environment.
4. The three main elements of instruction in a differentiated classroom are content, process, and product.
5. The principles of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping are key for DI.

Slide #4

Differentiated instruction

6. When teachers employ DI, they need to communicate with parents and students how their instruction may differ from traditional methods.
7. A teacher using DI will consider students' readiness levels, interests, and learning profiles helpful.
8. DI can enable a teacher to simultaneously meet the different learning needs of every student, those who struggle and those who do not.
9. Teachers who use DI are able to assess/grade accurately and fairly those students who perform at varying levels of proficiency.
10. In a differentiated classroom, the organization and structure of the physical and social space of the classroom makes a difference to the teacher and students.

Slide #5

Differentiated Instruction

- Differentiating instruction means creating multiple paths so that students of different abilities, interest or learning needs experience equally appropriate ways to absorb, use, develop and present concepts as a part of the daily learning process.
- It allows students to take greater responsibility and ownership for their own learning, and provides opportunities for peer teaching and cooperative learning.

Slide #6

Cooperative Learning Strategies *Students use shared ideas, & grow socially*

Why Cooperative Learning?
We are smarter together as a group than we are apart as individuals

Student-Centered Learning
Students get a break from being teacher-centered.

Most tasks require peers to work in a group.

How to Group Students?
The best grouping scenario is the one where students are safe and learning.

Put in students a group size

Grouping students by differences, homogeneous (similar) and heterogeneous (different) ones

Randomly group to share to get up

Group by student learning

Classroom Examples

Think-Pair-Share

Jigsaw
The Jigsaw Group
The Expert Group

Project Based Learning

Dangers a

Slide #7

COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGY

- ▶ A teaching strategy where small teams of students (or adults), with differing abilities, work together, using a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Students use and develop a variety of personal skills (communication, listening, collaboration) to accomplish a shared learning goal set by the teacher/facilitator. (Jhonson and Jhonson 1999, Sutherland and Wehby 2000, Sharan 2010)

Slide #8

BENEFITS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING

- Develops higher learning thinking skills
- Increases student retention
- Builds self-esteem in students
- Enhances student satisfaction with the learning experience
- Promotes a positive attitude towards the subject matter
- Develops oral communication skills
- Develops social interaction skills
- Promotes positive race relations
- Creates an environment of active, involved, exploratory learning
- Uses a team approach to problem solving
 - Encourages student responsibility for their own learning
 - Enhances self-management skills



Slide #9

EXAMPLES OF HOW TO USE COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM


Group Size: 2-4 students per group

Teacher can begin to instruct students on what's expected of them in a cooperative learning group, and use the following examples to get students working "together." A cooperative learning group can begin with 2 students, and then work up to 4 students, when first introducing into the classroom.

Activities:

- Round Robin
- Round Table
- Write-Around
- Numbered Heads Together
- Team Jigsaw

***Especially beneficial for ELL students.



Slide #10

WHERE DOES "CL" COME FROM?

- ▶ □ Philosopher John Dewey believed in "Progressive education". He wanted to ensure students would grow up to be active and responsible democratic citizens. □ Social Psychologist Morton Deutsch believed cooperation established interpersonal trust and built stable relationships. □ In the 1960's and 1970s CL research and practice expanded around the world as a way to decrease conflict among the cultural differences in schools. (Sharan, 2010)

Slide# 11

Cooperative learning structures

Discussion

- ✓ Think pair, share
- Three step interview
- Reciprocal Teaching
- Note-taking pairs
- Jig-Saw
- Graphic organizers
- Group grid
- Sequence chains

Writing

- Dyadic essay
- Peer Writing
- Problem solving
- Send-a-problem
- Three-stay-one Stray

Slide #12

Implimenting Cooperative learning

- ▶ Forming teams
- ▶ Promoting Positive independence
- ▶ Promoting actual accountability
- ▶ Help students develop teamwork skills
- ▶ Group processing
- ▶



Slide #13

Forming Teams

- ▶ Form teams of 3-4 students for most tasks
- ▶ Make teams heterogeneous in ability level
- ▶ If the assignments require work done outside class, form teams whose members have common blocks of time to meet during the week
- ▶ When students in a demographic category are historically at risk for dropping out, don't isolate members of that category in a team.

Slide# 14

Promoting positive interdependence

- ▶ Assign different roles to team members
- ▶ Use jigsaw to set up specialized expertise within each team
- ▶ Give bonus on a test
- ▶ Team member should report on each part of the subject



Slide #15

Advantages and Disadvantages of Cooperative Learning

Advantages

- ▶ It has shown to have positive
- ▶ Effect on students learning
- ▶ It has the potential to produce a level of engagement that other forms of learning cannot focus on the task.
- ▶ Students may explain better than to and another student than a teacher to class

Disadvantages

- ▶ A burden is making the student responsible for other's learning apart themselves
- ▶ One studies shows that in group of low achieving students become focus on the task
- ▶ Depending on the students motivation or interest on a particular subject that will determine well they learn
- ▶ Increases chances of conflict and conflict resolution skills

Slide#16

- ▶ Unless everyone in their group succeed
- ▶ Interpersonal and collaboration skills to be sure that the group are discussing activity
- ▶ Higher ability students are in position may feel to be experts, leaders, models, and teachers rather than lower ability gets the benefits of having leader or expert

- ▶ It is difficult for teacher academic content or something else
- ▶ Lower ability students perpetually in need of help experiencing the role of leader or expert relative to others in their group

Slide #17

Getting Parents Involved

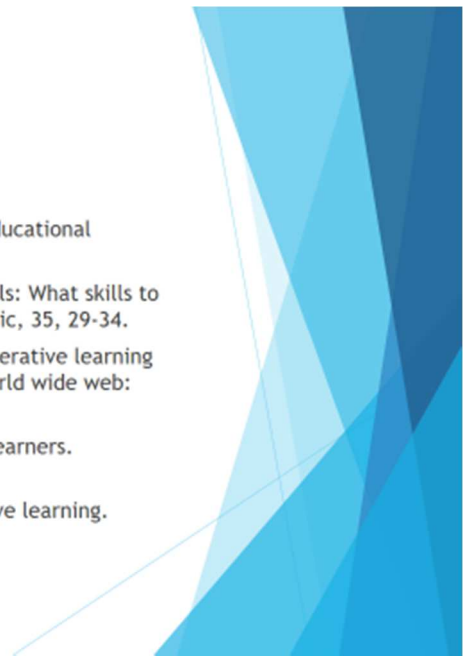
- ▶ Give them roles in PTA
- ▶ Establish homework session with parents after school
- ▶ Parent Interaction
- ▶ Get parents involve in school climate
- ▶ Engage parents in school environment
- ▶ Interact with parents on perspective of childs education



Slide #18

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Slide #19

How to get Parents involved

- ▶ Ditch stereotypical beliefs about parents and poverty
- ▶ Connect with parents as soon as they enter school
- ▶ Offer services and events that will bring parents into the school
- ▶ Publicize volunteer events and opportunities and student involvement.
- ▶ Ask parents for their ideas
- ▶ Invite parents to speak

Slide #20

Contd Getting Parents involved

- ▶ Give feedback
- ▶ Help parents to support homework
- ▶ Have Family nights
- ▶ Online advice videos teachers and parents can share ideas through web videos
On school website
- ▶ Home visits and parent teacher conferences
- ▶ Use social media to connect to parents

Slide #21

Cont'd Getting Parents involved

- ▶ Create positive study environments
- ▶ Help parents find a balance that works for their child.
- ▶ Provide information and ideas about how to best assist with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
Encourage reading at home by creating a custom reading list based on the child's personality, interests, and level.

Slide #22

Contd Getting Parents involved

- ▶ Set up clear homework policies.
- ▶ Detail how parents should be involved and revise them on a case-by-case basis depending on the student's progress.
Ask parents to stick to a study routine and set up a homework-friendly area where distractions are kept to a minimum.
That means enforcing a no-TV, computer, or phone environment.

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▶ **THANK YOU**

Sample lesson Plan

Teacher's Name:

Grade:

Subject: Reading

Story: New Friends

Unit Title: Relating to Others Outside of Jamaica

Focus Question: In what ways are we alike or different among the people to whom we relate to outside of Jamaica?

Duration: 2 x 60 mins

Strategy: Differentiated Instruction & Cooperative Learning

Attainment Target:

1. Apply relevant decoding skills to the reading and writing process.
2. Read for meaning, fluency, and enjoyment.

Data Driven Instruction: Some students are able to decode words in reading; however, they lack fluency and comprehension.

Skills: Reading, writing, communicating, syllabifying, identifying, and recalling information.

Key Vocabulary: America, American, another, baseball, beautiful, best, board, brought, Chad, chose, country, drew, Emma, envelope, farm, few, found, horse, I'll, know, like, Leroy, letter, list, long, lovely, maybe, meet, Miss Ball, Miss Ball's, Mr. Dale, names, pancakes, pen-pal, pen-pals, picture, post (verb), president, ranch, ride, Rose, round, showed, someone, stars, stripes, syrup, teaches, thing, Washington, weeks, what's, would, write

Materials: Word cards, Reggae Readers 3 (Textbook)

Objectives: At the end of the week students should be able to:

- Extend vocabulary by identifying four new words from the story presented on word cards.
- Demonstrate fluency and meaning while reading for enjoyment.
- Apply knowledge of fluent reading to identify and correct fluency errors.

Content: Text Outline: Mr. Dale, the Grade 3 teacher, has arranged for his class to correspond with a group of similar-aged children in America. The children are very excited and have lots of fun writing to their new friends explaining about life in Jamaica.

Best of all, they are very excited when they receive replies telling them all about life in the States!

Day 1 (Vocabulary)

Teaching/Activities:

Whole Group Activity- 20mins.

- Inform students of the lesson's objectives followed by an explanation of the text for the week. (Outline above).
- Pre-teach some of the key words from the text: President Washington, America, envelope, pen-pals, stripes, beautiful, American, brought, board, baseball, another, country, farm, found
- Write on the whiteboard one word at a time and sound out as many of the words as you can as you write (e.g., f-ar-m: farm). Explain the words one at a time. Note any interesting features in any of the words (e.g., baseball and pen-pal are both compound words). Also note other interesting features about the words (e.g., pen-pal has a hyphen joining two words together, whereas pancake and baseball do not); know and write both begin with silent letters; drew and few both ends with 'ew' which makes them rhyming words.
- Point to the title on Page 78 of textbook (Relating to others Outside Jamaica) and read it with the class. Discuss what the children think the text might be about. Look at the picture on page 78. Mr. Dale has received a letter from an American teacher friend, Miss Ball. Ask What is Mr. Dale holding? How can you tell the letter has come from abroad? Can you guess what is in the envelope? Which child looks happy about the news? Which child looks a little worried?
- Look at the picture on Page 79 of textbook. Ask What is Mr. Dale pinning on the board? Can you read any of the names? Whose names do you think they are? Do the children look interested?
- Look at the picture on Page 80 of textbook. Mr. Dale has received a package of letters from pen-pals in America and is distributing them to the class. Ask What is Mr. Dale holding? How can you tell the letter has come from abroad? How do the children look? Are they excited? Why do you think this is? Note the circular insert of the American flag. Point out the stars and stripes on it. Do any of the children recognize the flag?
- Look at the picture on Page 81 of textbook. Leroy and Rose are reading their letters from pen-pals Chad and Emma respectively. They are thinking about what each letter says the pen-pals like doing. Ask What does Chad like playing? What does Emma like eating?

Group Activity- 30 mins.**Group 1- Independent**

Have students work in pairs to break the sentences into phrases. Students will then practice reading page by page of the story fluently. Students will use peer evaluation during their reading.

Group 2- Teacher Guided

Using word tiles students will form words from the story that they know how to pronounce, each word formed and pronounced will be used to make a sentence. (sentences not from the story)

Group 3- Independent

From a worksheet student will complete this activity.

President, America, envelope, teacher, letter class, baseball, from, know, American

Say the words slowly. Then write the words which contain:

- a) one syllable _____
- b) two syllables _____
- c) three syllables _____
- d) four syllables _____

Group 4 Teacher Guided

Students will make smaller words from the word **PRESIDENT**, the new words created will be written on flashcards for further use.

Each group will rotate after 10 mins, from teacher directed to independent.

Whole Group Activity- 10 mins.

Students from each group will share one activity they completed and what they learned from it.

Evaluation:

Day 2 (Oral Reading)

Objective: Students should be able to: Use echo reading of the story, *New Friends*, to develop fluency in reading.

Material: Reggae Reader 3

Whole Group: 20 mins.

- Inform students of the lesson's objective.
- Prompt students to look at Page 78 of textbook (*Relating to others Outside Jamaica*) where they will read the story's title.
- The teacher will model read Pages 78-81 to the class slowly with expression, do it a second time, stopping after each sentence then encouraging student to copy you.
- Explain any unfamiliar words within the context of each sentence. Pre-taught words will be highlighted during the reading exercise.
- Read Page 79 to the class slowly with expression. Go through the same process as above. Try and find a word on the page for each letter of the alphabet (e.g., all, board, Chad). It will not be possible to find a word for each letter! Which letters could not be found? Can the children suggest any word beginning with each missing letter?
- Read Page 80 to the class slowly with expression. Go through the same process as above. Find and read any words which have more than one syllable (e.g., president). Ask children to listen carefully and tap out each syllable as you read it (e.g. pre/si/dent).
- Read Page 81 to the class slowly with expression. Go through the same process as above. Ask children to find any exclamation or question marks on the page and explain why we use them

Group 1- Independent 30 mins.

- In pairs children will be invited to read the pages on their own together. Each pair will find and point to longer words which contain the following smaller words: America (American), other (another), let (letters), child (children), ran (ranch) wash (Washington), our (your), ends (friends)

Group 2- Teacher Guided- 30 mins.

- Read Page 78–79 to the group slowly with expression. Go through the same process as above. Ask children to find the proper nouns and say which pronoun could be used in place, e.g., Mr. Dale (he), Emma (she), pen-pals (they).

Group 3 Independent 30 mins.

Complete the following in pairs.

- a) ____ pa ____ someone you become friendly with from another country.
- b) ____ ve ____ a paper cover you put a letter in before mailing it.

- c) pr_____ the official leader of a country that does not have a king or queen.
- d) _____ ie _____ the opposite of 'enemy'
- e) _____ room a room where students are taught.
- f) _____ nc _____ A large farm in the US

Group 4 Teacher Assisted- 30 mins.

- Give 11 children word cards with **Mr., Dale, put, a, long, list, of, names, on, the, and board**. Ask them to come to the front and arrange themselves so their word cards make a sentence. Ask them to rearrange themselves to make another sentence by asking children holding the words **on, the, and board** to come to the beginning of the sentence and show how it is possible to construct another sentence meaning the same using only the same words. Now write on the board On the board Mr. Dale....

Each group will rotate after 10 mins, from teacher directed to independent.

Whole Group Activity- 10 mins.

Students from each group will share one activity they completed and what they learned from it.

Evaluation:

Day 3 Activities

Activities for Newcomers

Activity-based tips to help English language learners who are new to your classroom. Related links include: Establishing an Atmosphere of Acceptance, Help Your Newcomers Develop Pride in Their Heritage, and Pair Your Newcomers with Buddies.

- **An International Crew**
Students in Grades 4-6 learn about cooperation by planning an international project.
A place to find lesson plans and classroom activities about Asia. Users can scroll through the list of plans to find those of interest to them. Many of these lessons include links to related readings, images, or classroom activities.
- **Changing Roles**

In this activity, students in Grades 5-8 explore the folklore of different cultures

Evaluation Form to be Completed by All Participants

(Please check or fill in as appropriate.)

1. Type of school at which you teach?
 - a. Early childhood
 - b. Primary
 - c. All Age/Junior high
 - d. Secondary
 - e. Tertiary
2. What is your qualification?
 - a. Pretrained
 - b. Diploma
 - c. Pre-trained Graduate
 - d. Specialist 1
 - e. Specialist 2
 - f. Graduate
 - g. Post Graduate
3. Did you attend this professional development (PD) workshop with specific expectations?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. To what extent did the PD meet your expectations?
 - a. Less than expected
 - b. Just as I expected
 - c. More than expected
5. Rate the time allotted to the sessions.
 - a. Very adequate
 - b. Adequate
 - c. Not Adequate
6. Rate the overall content of the sessions.
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very Good
 - c. Satisfactory
 - d. Poor

8. Which aspects were most beneficial to you?

9. How will you use the information received?

- a. In my classroom
- b. In my workshop with colleagues
- c. Other . Explain: _____

10. Name the presenters who were most effective in their delivery of their presentations: _____

11. How do you rate the facilities?

- a. Excellent b. Very good c. Satisfactory d. Poor

12. Quality of the meals

- a. Excellent b. Very good c. Satisfactory d. Poor

13. Any additional comments or recommendations/

THANK YOU.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol with questions.

Effective Instructional strategies for Teaching Students in poverty.

Date _____

Pseudonym _____

Introduction

- Introduce yourself
- Discuss the purpose of the study
- Provide structure of the interview (audio recording, taking notes, and use of pseudonym)
- Ask if they have any questions
- Test audio recording equipment
- SMILE-make the participants feel comfortable

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

(Semi-structured interview; and major questions)

Preface/Introduction

For this research I want to explore instructional strategies that teachers use to teach students in poverty compared to those who are not, also if all students are taught in a whole group setting or cooperative groups formed.

Students are performing low on literacy exams, not reading at their grade levels, and experiencing problems with low achievement in this school district and the country as a whole.

A. Instructional Strategies Used

1. Approximately what percentage of students in your classroom are in poverty or low income?

2. Provide examples of strategies that you use when you teach students in poverty. How do these methods differ from how you teach students who are not in poverty? If teacher states there is no difference then he/she will be asked why there is not difference.
3. Which instructional strategies do you use most in your classroom? How do these strategies assist the students you teach?
4. How do you use differentiated instruction or cooperative learning strategies in your classroom? If neither of these types of strategies are used then the teacher will be asked why he/she doesn't use them.
5. How do students react to teaching and learning while you use these strategies?
6. Are students motivated to learn and do they seem interested? How do you know that they are motivated and interested in learning?

B. Effectiveness of Instructional Strategies

7. Which instructional strategies are most effective with students in poverty? Why do you think that is?
8. How do you determine if the instructional strategies used are effective? What evidence do you see that shows strategies are effective?
9. What improvements have you seen in students' overall performance as the result of specific instructional strategies that you have used?

C. Teacher Preparedness and Professional Development

10. How prepared do you think you are to teach students in poverty? Please describe your preparation.
11. Where do you go to find strategies to use to teach students in poverty? If teacher does not indicate a specific place or source, follow up with: Where do you go to find strategies to teach students in general?
12. What learning experiences have been more productive to you in teaching students in poverty? Please explain why you think these experiences have been productive. If no experiences have been productive, follow up with: Please explain why you think that.
13. What professional development training has been most useful to you in teaching students in poverty? Please explain why you think this training has been useful. If no training has been useful follow up with, Please explain why you think that.
14. What assistance (e.g., professional development, training) would you like from the administration and school district to better meet the academic needs of students in poverty? How often would you like this training to take place?

Thank you for participating

Appendix C: Lesson Plan Checklist

Indicators	Never	Sometimes	Always
Appropriateness of objectives			
Evidence of numeracy and literacy across instruction			
Evidence of data driven instruction			
Content appropriate and adequate			
Methodology appropriate accommodation of evidence of at least two types of differentiated instruction			
Evidence of infusion of ICT			
Assessment aligned to objectives			
Previous evaluation completed and adequate			
Additional comments: Lesson had plans for differentiation; a lot of cooperative strategy was used for lesson.			
