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Educators' Perspectives of the International Baccalaureate Program

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Walden University

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Olivia McDonald-Lane

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

Educators' Perspectives of the International Baccalaureate Program

by

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MA, Walden University, 2005

BS, University of the West Indies, 2000

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2020

Abstract

The school districts face many challenges when incorporating and utilizing the International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IBPYP) framework. The success of IBPYP depends on how these challenges perceived by the teachers. The purpose of this study was to explore and highlight challenges associated with the IBPYP and the influence these challenges may have in shaping teachers' perceptions of the program. The central research questions focused on gathering data on the challenges teachers face as they utilize the program and whether or not these challenges shape their perception of the program, or affected their ability to utilize the program standards and practices effectively. Growth mindset versus fixed mindset was the conceptual framework underlying this study. The study employed purposeful sampling that included 18 educators with various years of experience in education and with the IBPYP. Telephone interviews were the main source of data collection. Open coding and inductive analysis identified emerging patterns that led to themes such as *professional development and training, lack of resources, time, and standards integration*. Findings revealed that teachers did not feel equipped to engage effectively in the inquiry learning process due to the challenges they faced. Based on the findings, recommendations include the need for districts and school leaders to be better informed about the IBPYP before its adoption. Positive social change may occur once district leaders are able to provide the necessary resources, training and professional development that will empower teachers as they utilize the IBPYP.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my amazing parents, Emil and Lloyd McDonald who will never be able to read it but will always be here with me in spirit. Thank you both for setting me on a path of achieving my goals and for instilling the value of a good education and what it means to be a lifelong learner. Without you, I would not be the ambitious scholar that I am today.

Although you both earned your wings many years ago, your love, support, humility, encouragement, words of wisdom and courage have never left me. It is those qualities that you blessed me with which have allowed me to be a blessing to others and in your absence, others have taken on the role of mother and father to me. Thank you both for the time you shared with me and for the abundance of love you gave to me during our short time together.

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I would like to thank my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who has been the driving force in my life and who has brought me to this point of self-actualization. I also want to thank my friends who have been great supporters and my sources of inspiration.

I have seen so many changes during the years spent writing and conducting this study and I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my wonderful husband, Dewan Lane who graced me with his presence in 2018 and has not left me one day since. I am grateful for his friendship, love, and overwhelming support. Thank you for undertaking this journey with me, my love.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	iv
List of Figures	v
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	3
Problem Statement	5
Purpose of the Study	8
Research Question(s)	9
Conceptual Framework	9
Nature of the Study	11
Definitions.....	12
Assumptions.....	13
Scope and Delimitations	13
Limitations	14
Significance.....	15
Summary	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review	17
Literature Search Strategy.....	17
Conceptual Framework.....	18
Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable	22
Summary and Conclusions	36
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	38
Research Design and Rationale	39

Role of the Researcher	40
Methodology	40
Participant Selection	42
Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection	42
Data Analysis Plan	43
Trustworthiness	44
Ethical Procedures	45
Summary	45
Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions	46
Setting	46
Data Collection	47
Data Analysis	50
Results	52
Evidence of Trustworthiness	62
Summary	66
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	67
Interpretation of the Findings	68
Limitations of the Study	78
Recommendations	80
Implications	81
Conclusion	82
References	83
Appendix A: Interview Questions	90

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate91

List of Tables

Table 1. Study Participants' Demographics.....49

Table 2. Emerging Themes.....53

List of Figures

Figure 1. IB programs.....	26
Figure 2. Planning, time, and resources embedded in the PYP.....	76
Figure 3. Data analysis process	52

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Since the 2000s, accountability measures such as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), Common Core, and recently, the Every Student Succeeds Act have led school leaders in the United States to look for more creative, research-based ways of promoting teaching and learning, and developing the whole child (Korsmo, Barrett, Friesen, & Finnley, 2012). Schools have been under increasing pressure to turn around failing schools or face loss of funding and other sanctions (Hemelt, 2014). With the threat of government take-over or school closings, schools throughout the United States have had to find new programs that can develop students' skills in math and reading, critical thinking, and collaboration (Korsmo et al., 2012). Other schools' reform may not be solely academic, but may also involve the transformation of their organizational leadership models, curriculum, teaching staff, and instructional practices to promote improved teaching and learning (Hemelt, 2014). According to Buckley (2016), school reform is not only a way to close the achievement gap but also a way to strengthen and support marginalized students both academically and socially (Buckley, 2016).

Buckley (2016) observed that inquiry-based research of instructional practices was helpful in improving academic achievement while allowing classrooms to become student-centered and less teacher directed. Over two thousand schools across the United States have begun to invest in the constructivist IB program (Law, McDowall, & Feder, 2012).

The IB program provides teachers a curriculum framework for use along with the state and district curricula (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015). The purpose

of the IB framework is to provide students with educational experiences which allow for student-centered learning, global awareness, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking skills (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2015).

Research shows that there are several challenges that teachers encounter as they utilize the IB standards and practices simultaneously with state and local standards. Savage and Drake (2016) found that educators interpreted the concepts of the program differently and therefore utilized it differently. This led to a lack of consistency in program use in classrooms. Teachers' teaching and learning philosophies as well as their attitudes also led to program challenges. The IB program calls for a constructivist mindset shift while many teachers were comfortable with the prescriptive nature of teaching and learning (Savage & Drake, 2016). Other researchers in their studies also noted that administrators were a hindrance to the success of the program as they did not schedule time for collaborative planning which the program called for nor did the school's timetable reflect the minutes necessary for inquiry-based instruction. Steffen and Bueno-Villaverde (2018) also discovered similar challenges. They noted that inquiry-based learning called for a shift from traditional teaching and learning practices. Teachers, therefore, needed to change their mindset to be able to utilize the IB program successfully. Additionally, inconsistencies with teachers' interpretation of the concepts and the way they utilized the program came across as challenges to effective program practice (Steffen & Bueno-Villaverde, 2018).

In the state of Georgia, there are 26 public and private elementary schools that are currently educating students using the IB curriculum framework. Twenty-three schools

are state or charter schools and three are private schools (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). In this study, I examined one elementary school to explore the problem and address the research questions. This elementary school is a public charter school that received authorization to become an IBPYP World school in 2008. It is a co-educational school that was designed to serve an intentionally diverse population made up of native, immigrant, and refugee children. This school's mission is to educate children holistically while preparing them to become 21st century global citizens who can take responsibility for their own learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

Background

I chose to conduct my study in an IBPYP school to examine teachers' perceptions of the IBPYP and the challenges they face as IBPYP practitioners. This school presented as a suitable option for this study because of its diversity. Students and staff represent thirty nationalities and twenty-five languages (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018). There is limited current empirical research that examines the perceptions elementary teachers have of the IBPYP or the challenges they face. The IB program is gaining strength and popularity around the world (Law et al., 2012). There is still, however, a gap in the research of teachers' perceptions of the IB program and the challenges they face during practice of the program standards. There is limited data on the perceptions of IB educators regarding the program as well as the challenges they face as they utilize the program (Law et al., 2012). Various researchers have examined the IB program, its history, and benefits, and have identified or described in limited fashion the

views held by educators regarding the program and how it is implemented or utilized in schools specifically elementary schools. A lot of the research is outdated and does not address current views held by teachers especially those who use the IBPYP standards and practices. The bulk of research found on the IB program was carried out by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), creators and sponsors of the IB program. The research conducted by the IBO is subject to bias. In this study, I sought to add an alternate perspective or a different voice to current research conducted on the IB.

Researchers of the IB program agree that teachers are critical to the success of the program in schools that utilize the IB program (IBO, 2017). It is essential that teachers not only be passionate or invested in the IB program, but can utilize the program with fidelity (IBO, 2017). The use of the IBPYP curriculum framework in IB schools signals a shift in strategies and practices (Cook, 2017). Teachers are now facilitators, mentors, and at times observers in the classroom while students have to analyze, synthesize, think critically and creatively, and take more ownership of their learning (Cook, 2017). IB teachers not only need significant training they must utilize the IB curriculum materials and pedagogy effectively as well as work diligently, collaboratively, and creatively to instruct their students in an inquiry-based setting (Jones, 2014).

Although the IB program has become increasingly popular, researchers argue the point that there is room for unintended issues to arise with its use (Limitaco, 2013). These issues may include misaligned teacher interpretations of the program, blurred teacher expectations, and the values and ideals which educators themselves hold (Limitiaco, 2013). During my tenure as an IB teacher, coordinator, and assistant principal, I observed

decidedly lackluster and uncoordinated use of the program in classrooms. Many teachers either completely disregarded using the IB curriculum framework in their lesson delivery or created and used their interpretation of the program. The challenges teachers faced arose openly in faculty, leadership, and board meetings during which many teachers, parents, and administration noted that implementing the IB framework along with the state and local standards was very challenging and confusing. During the IB coordinators' sessions, coordinators from other IB schools in the state made the same observations. Several researchers also noted that teachers within IB schools believe they need more professional development; time to collaborate; resources; and support from school and district administrators (Cook, 2017, Limtiaco, 2013, & Pascoe, 2017).

Problem Statement

While research supports the use of inquiry-based learning in classrooms, researchers also indicate reluctance on the part of teachers to implement the inquiry-based model (Pascoe, 2017). Teachers cited several challenges with inquiry-based programs such as a lack of exposure to inquiry-based programs, insufficient training, and a lack of materials and equipment necessary for inquiry-based teaching and learning. Others cite difficulty in managing an inquiry-based teaching and learning environment (Pascoe, 2017).

According to one IBPYP coordinator from the study site “each year educators become increasingly disgruntled with the IBPYP program and have asked on many occasions if the school could discontinue its use of the program”. No clear rationale has been discovered for teachers’ dissatisfaction with the program. Another IBPYP

coordinator expressed the views that, “teachers frequently stated that they did not feel supported in their efforts to implement the program and there was no reason to continue to implement a program that is so abstract and challenging.” There, however, are teachers who thrive in an inquiry-based learning environment such as IB. The question is; – what sets them apart from other teachers who struggle with the program?

There are gaps in the research of schools that implement the IB program. Specifically, the personal and professional characteristics that teachers possess (McGowan, 2016). These personal and professional characteristics include teacher education, values, beliefs, and philosophy. Whether a teacher is a successful inquiry teacher or a reluctant inquiry teacher, the personal and professional characteristics that they possess develop due to factors that shape their perceptions of inquiry-based programs that they utilize in teaching and learning. These factors are, however, not consistently documented (McGowan, 2016).

The problem that I examined in this qualitative case study was the challenges teachers face as they utilize the IB program standards and how these challenges shape their perceptions of the IB program. According to the literature, teachers who utilize the IB program face several challenges that seemingly affect their ability to utilize the inquiry-based program with fidelity and in some cases the program standards and practices were completely ignored (Pascoe, 2017). Teachers cited several areas that were creating barriers for effective program utilization. These areas included, insufficient training, a lack of knowledge about the program on the part of administrators, insufficient resources for teachers to utilize, and insufficient funds for consistent professional

development (Cook, 2017, McGowan, 2016, Pascoe, 2017). Educators also stated that balancing the IB philosophy, educators' personal and professional philosophies as well as federal accountability requirements were factors that presented challenges for educators who work in an IB school (Glass, 2016). Additional barriers as noted by Meadows (2017) included time for collaborative sessions with teachers and the IB coordinator, time for vertical planning and alignment of the program standards, staff selection, and effective evaluation practices of the program.

The success of students and the success of the IB program in IB schools depend on the knowledge and skills of IB teachers, and as such, it is essential to examine the challenges IB educators encounter as they utilize the program and therefore the perceptions they develop of the program (Cook, 2017). As schools, school districts, teachers, and parents contend with the continued high stakes accountability measures such as Common Core, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), and the Every Student Succeeds Act, they are making the shift to the IB program in search of quality education and a more student-centered instructional focus (Glass, 2016).

IB schools have seen an increase in enrollment in recent years thus creating the notion that the program is one that can effect change (Glass, 2016). Over two thousand schools in the United States have adopted the program or are in the exploratory phase of possible adoption (IBO, 2017). Educators in authorized IB World schools are now identifying and reporting challenges of the program as it pertains to instructional practices, resources, and professional development (McGowan, 2016). Additionally, since federal mandates require teachers in the United States to teach federal standards

along with local state standards, they now have the added challenge of incorporating the IB philosophies, standards, and practices in their curriculum units (McGowan, 2016).

With increasing emphasis on the IB program and IB schools, teachers play an increasingly vital role in the use and success of the program. It is therefore essential to examine challenges teachers face and the perceptions they have of the IB program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to illuminate and explore the IBPYP's challenges and how these challenges shape teachers' perceptions of the program. It would be ideal for schools and school districts to use results from this research to inform decisions regarding teacher use of the IBPYP and make suitable recommendations for the future of the program. I addressed the problem of this study by utilizing qualitative research, specifically a single site, observation case study approach. For this qualitative study, I chose to focus on an elementary school that implements the IBPYP in the southeastern part of the United States. I conducted interviews with 18 teachers including the IB coordinator. This is a small school with 18 classrooms, kindergarten to fifth grade. Participation from all classroom teachers was the desired outcome for data collection. I selected participants through purposeful sampling to ensure each participant had varying degrees of experience with the IBPYP. I used semi-structured, recorded interviews to gather data for this study. According to Vaughn and Turner (2016), the semi-structured format is a good way to build understanding of study participants' perspectives, assumptions, and expectations while building rapport. In order to uncover emerging themes and patterns, I sorted, coded, and analyzed data collected from interviews.

Numerous researchers have examined the adoption and implementation of the IB program, but few have discussed the challenges teachers of the program face and the perceptions they have as they utilize the program in their instructional practices. This study is providing a vital a voice to teachers and the problems they face as they deliver instruction using the IB model. What educators think about a curriculum, challenges they face, and their teaching practices are essential for effective program practice and should be heard (McGowan, 2016).

Research Questions

Research Question (RQ1): What challenges do teachers face as they employ the IBPYP framework?

Research Question (RQ2): How do the challenges that teachers face affect their perceptions of the IBPYP program?

Research Question (RQ3): Do the challenges that IBPYP educators face impact their ability to effectively utilize the program and its standards?

Conceptual Framework

Vygotsky developed the constructivist theory. The work on constructivism was republished in the 1970's. The constructivist theory is the underlying principle of the IB Program (IBO, 2016). Teachers who utilize the IB program are therefore employing the constructivist model in their classrooms (Yoders, 2014). Under the constructivist theory, the teacher assumes the roles of facilitator, guide, and mentor. The teacher observes, conferences with students, take notes, and answers questions as he or she facilitates the inquiry. (Juvova, Chudy, Neumeister, Plischke, & Kvintova, 2015).

To employ the constructivist IB model, teachers have to make a shift in values, beliefs, and philosophy to integrate the IB curriculum standards and practices successfully (Cook, 2017). Teachers have to change their mindset regarding their teaching and learning practices. Fixed mindset versus growth mindset is the conceptual framework for this study.

Hochanadel and Finamore, (2015) found that individuals with a growth mindset valued effort and were able to overcome challenges and adversity. However, those with a fixed mindset struggled in the face of adversity and were not adaptable to change.

Nicoll (2014) examined the mindset of educators as they went through a transformative change in their respective schools. He observed that as schools and school districts have sought out innovative practices over the years, little has changed to bring about education reform, and teachers have become increasingly pessimistic and frustrated at new educational methods and strategies purported to bring about educational reform. Nicoll (2014) found that the mindset of educators is integral to successful change in educational reform.

The term mindset refers to the beliefs and assumptions that individuals hold and create preconceived notions and biases (Nicoll, 2014). These beliefs and assumptions fashion behaviors, problem-solving techniques, the ability to adopt or reject new ideas, and goal setting methods (Nicoll, 2014). A teachers' mindset dictates how he or she copes during a change, beliefs or assumptions held regarding teaching and learning, teaching practices, and how students learn (Nicoll, 2014).

Educators with a fixed mindset are not risk takers and do everything they can to hide flaws and any teaching mistakes (Dweck, 2015). Educators with a fixed mindset are resistant to change and collaboration with colleagues because they fear humiliation; and fear being seen as possibly an ineffective teacher (Dweck, 2015). However, educators with a growth mindset see change as a move in the right direction and are willing to discuss classroom issues with others to gain new insights and strategies (Dweck, 2015).

Nature of the Study

This qualitative, single case study examines the challenges of the IB program and educators' perspectives of the IBPYP program. Qualitative researchers examine topics in a contextual setting (Hemming, 2018). Qualitative research explores new topics and ideas and the results of the inquiry are presented in a narrative format that paints a picture and gives the story of the research subject, process, and the researcher (Heming, 2018). The use of qualitative methods enable school leaders and other stakeholders to find the results of the study useful in understanding the challenges teachers face and the perception they develop about the program as they utilize the program's standards and practices.

Open-ended questions along with recorded interviews collected data from study participants. The audio-recorded interview questions served to elicit participant responses in order to find thematic patterns that may emerge from participant responses. Participant selection occurred through purposeful sampling. The main goal of participant selection was to enlist at least 18 study participants because there are only 18 classroom teachers who utilize the program at the case site. According to Creswell (2012), this number of participants may be sufficient since a qualitative study allows data to be collected from a

small number of participants. The qualitative design enables participants to give voice to their unique experiences in their unique school environments (Creswell, 2012).

Researchers may use other methods of research, but a qualitative, single case study is effective in providing the most comprehensive approach to fulfill the purposes of the study that is to examine teachers' perceptions and challenges (Creswell, 2012).

Definitions

IB Program: The International Baccalaureate Program (IB) applies the constructivist approach in teaching and learning and provides holistic and rigorous education to students aged 3-19 (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2018).

IBPYP: The International Baccalaureate Primary Years Program is one of four IB programs offered to students 3-12 years old. It utilizes a holistic, inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2019).

Constructivism: Constructivism is a theory of knowledge that asserts that human beings construct meaning of their lived experiences by building on prior knowledge and experiences (Yoder, 2014).

Fixed Mindset: A fixed mindset says abilities are innate and finite. One cannot learn new skills (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015).

Growth Mindset: A growth mindset asserts that new skills, abilities, and intelligence will develop over time (Hochanadel and Finamore, 2015).

Mindset: The term mindset refers to people's beliefs and their way of thinking regarding human attributes and abilities (Dweck, 2015).

Assumptions

In conducting this research, I operated under a few assumptions. First, multiple realities exist in any study and these may include the researcher's, those of the individuals being investigated, and the reader or audience interpreting the results (Merriam, 2009). Second, there are multiple perspectives to consider including the voices of participants who are included in the study and I assumed that participant responses were from their perceptions from situations they have experienced. Additionally, I assumed that this study will serve to inform all stakeholders as well as potential IB candidate schools and districts of the inherent challenges associated with the IB program and the perspectives educators have of the program. Although the study was contained to a single site, an independent public charter school, the hope is that the study's findings are generalizable to other IB or potential IB schools or districts that may be independent, private, or public institutions.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of the study involved the lived experiences of 18 IBPYP educators. The study participants were public elementary (K-5) charter school teachers who have taught for at least one year in an IB setting. They are also certified individuals who have taught in the program since inception or have previous teaching experience outside of an IBPYP setting and came to the site after initiation. The participants are (a) male and female, (b) novice and experienced teachers, (c) general and special education teachers. Also, the IB coordinator has taught the program and is currently a mentor and coach to

other teachers. The participants were limited by their role as teachers in an IBPYP setting.

Limitations

The potential limitations of this study include human bias, limited sample size, and the self-reporting by the participants. Other potential limitations would also include time and place since the study will take place in the southeastern United States, in one school, and one district in one county.

I am a past employee of the school in which the study took place. I was the IBPYP coordinator and a practitioner of the IBPYP. I have also participated in professional development from the school and the IBO. Therefore, as a past employee, this study is subject to human bias. Chapter 3 will identify and describe potential biases and subjectivities.

Creswell (2012) stated that stratification of the sample population should occur before the selection of the population. This study, however, focused only on interviewing teachers at one IBPYP site. The stratification of participants from the site to only those who had teaching experience at a non-IBPYP site before coming to the site and those who were already teaching at the site before or during the inception of the IBPYP limits the size of the population. The findings of this study may not be generalizable to all IBPYP sites due to the limited stratification of the participants of the particular location and the small sample size.

Self-reporting of data is a characteristic of interpretive, qualitative research because the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, which supports the

goal of bringing understanding to the research (Merriam, 2009). In this qualitative study, the findings of the interview data is subject to other interpretations, but the identification and monitoring of the researcher's biases and subjectivities during data collection contribute to the depth of the analysis of the data (Merriam, 2009).

Significance

The significance of this study is that it may provide a new and useful way to provide educators who participate in the IBPYP with much-needed support and resources. It is imperative that legislators and school leaders gain a better understanding of the IBPYP program in order to provide more support, resources, and professional development for the successful implementation and sustainability of the IBPYP program in schools (Law et al., 2012). Secondly, the qualitative nature of the data is suitable because I am able to describe the experiences of the teachers at the study site. The study will ask study participants to describe experiences that include challenges regarding how they affect their practice of inquiry-based learning. Finally, the main goal is for the data from this study to inform future practices of the IBPYP in other schools.

Summary

When schools and school districts adopt new programs, school leaders, and other stakeholders want to improve student learning and the learning experience for students and teachers. Understanding the perceptions of teachers who have experienced the challenges of a new program, the IBPYP, might assist other school leaders and teachers in adopting new school programs. Addressing this topic is necessary as teacher resistance to the practice of a new philosophy and application might be high (Meadows,

2017). During the data collection process, teachers had the opportunity to share their perceptions in an in-depth way on their challenges and beliefs of a new school program, the IBPYP.

This chapter included the background and problem statement, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, nature of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, definitions, assumptions, scope, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 contains a literature review that includes a historical overview and current findings on the inquiry-based IB PYP, in-depth discussion on the conceptual framework, summary, and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This Literature review has five main areas of focus. These areas include an overview of the IB program, challenges associated with the use of the IB program framework in the classroom, teachers' perspective of the IB program, student achievement within the IB program, and the conceptual framework that I will utilize in this study. I chose to undertake this study because of my previous employment in an IB authorized school for 10 years where I saw first-hand the challenges associated with utilizing the program in a public school. I, however, heard and saw mixed reactions in teachers' beliefs and philosophies regarding the use of the program. I, therefore, decided that the challenges teachers face, and their perceptions of the program were worth investigating. Research, I found, describes in detail the challenges teachers face as they utilize the IBPYP program and discuss findings regarding teachers' perceptions of the IB program.

Literature Search Strategy

Walden online library, IBO (online), electronic databases such as ERIC, EBSCOhost, Academic Search Premier, and books provided significant resources used in identifying sources. Keywords search included *International Baccalaureate Program*, *IBPYP*, *Inquiry-based learning*, *teachers' perspective of IB*, *constructivism*, *challenges of the IB curriculum framework*, *use of IB in teaching and learning*, *Mindset*, *growth versus fixed mindset*, and *student achievement in IB schools*. The resources that I examined were all relevant to my study, and I discussed each one in detail in the upcoming sections. It is important to note that during my search for resources, I discovered only dated studies

while the IBO.org housed current studies regarding the IB program. Fitzgerald (2015) indicated that although there is ongoing research on specific aspects of the IB program, the majority of them are research conducted by or for the IBO and there is concern about the biases of such studies (Fitzgerald, 2015). I found recent studies conducted by PhD students and, in reviewing these resources, I discovered that they used many of the same dated resources that I also found during my literature search. A lot of the research I examined cited similar sources such as Culross and Tarver (2011), Kauffman (2005), Korsmo, Barrett, Friesen, and Finnley (2012), Stillisano, Waxman, Hostrup, and Rollins (2011), and Twig (2010).

Conceptual Framework

The IB framework involves the constructivist theory as it engages students in inquiry-based learning that allows them to construct their meaning from the new concepts they are learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The idea of constructivism represents a different method of teaching and learning for teachers and students. The use of constructivism in classrooms represents a paradigm shift in teaching and learning for all stakeholders (Meadows, 2017). For teachers to be successful with the constructivist model there has to be a mindset change for all stakeholders including educators (Meadows, 2017). An educator has to be motivated and willing to adjust his or her teaching and learning styles as well as traditional pedagogic beliefs (Stefan & Popescu, 2014).

Motivation is necessary for success. When people are motivated, they tend to accomplish more than they originally intended (Oriji & Amadi, 2016). The mindset of

individuals plays a role in their motivation and subsequent successful accomplishments (Oriji & Amadi, 2016).

In the 21st century, educators have to shift their thinking or philosophical mindset regarding teaching and learning (Oriji & Amadi, 2016). This mindset shift includes how educators view learners and most importantly how educators feel they are able to affect the learning environment (Oriji & Amadi, 2016).

Philosophical mindset shifts are important for teachers to be able to support multidimensional learning environments; which includes utilizing inquiry-based programs such as the IBPYP. Researcher Carol Dweck and colleagues established that human beings have different mindsets in different areas of their lives and various experiences (Dweck, 2015). People either, exhibit a fixed mindset or a growth mindset (Blackwell & Dockterman, 2014). When a fixed mindset is on display, the belief is an innate ability, meaning a person either has the natural talent to do something or not. A growth mindset is the belief that through hard work and practice, a person can develop a particular talent or skill and become good at it (Blackwell & Dockterman, 2014). The mindset people hold in different situations will determine whether or whether not they persevere in the face of adversity and whether or whether not they put in the energy and time needed to succeed or accomplish a task (Blackwell & Dockterman, 2014).

Blackwell and Dockterman (2014) noted that mindset is not a fixed attribute but maybe learned through instruction and experiences. Others have the ability to influence people's mindset including peers, teachers, mentors, and the broader community. Oriji and Amadi (2016) discuss the idea that mindset change can come about or influenced if

educators receive compulsory training, continuous professional development, tutoring from expert peers, or a reward system created for teachers who make progress in learning a new system or program.

Dweck's mindset theory is essential when examining how teachers succeed when they must utilize new tools and learning strategies in their classrooms. Teachers who employ the IB curriculum framework have to learn a new teaching strategy, new standards, and practices that they have to integrate with existing state and local standards. For teachers to be successful as they utilize the IB curriculum framework, their mindset will need to be that of a growth mindset versus fixed. Schools that seek to be innovative and undergo reform adopt the IBPYP program to address educational concerns (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2016). Such an adoption leads to many changes including a mindset change of all stakeholders. Unfortunately, whenever new programs are approved and implemented, it is natural for human beings to resist change and maintain the status quo or what is familiar to them (Nicoll, 2014). For an actual paradigm shift to take place, educators must also shift their traditional beliefs and ideologies regarding teaching and learning (Nicoll, 2014).

When schools implement new programs such as the IB program, they struggle to grasp a shared vision of how to integrate the program and what it should look like in classrooms (Doerksen, 2012). Because the program is open to interpretation and is constructivist rather than prescriptive, educators who rely on a set pattern or structure for teaching and learning struggle with the standards and practices of the program (Doerksen, 2012). Educators with a fixed mindset are more concerned with looking foolish, do not

enjoy collaboration, are reluctant to serve as facilitators and coaches, and are unwilling to have a student-centered classroom versus a teacher-centered one (Dweck, 2015).

Educators with a fixed mindset will not be entirely invested and open to the constructivist way of teaching and learning. They, therefore, tend to struggle more when utilizing the program in their classes as, on the other hand, educators with a growth mindset are more open-minded when it comes to change and show determination and perseverance when working with new programs (Dweck, 2015). Those with a growth mindset focus on learning new strategies, taking risks, learning from mistakes, and showing more determination (Dweck, 2015).

According to Dweck (2015), Greg Gero conducted a research study that examined teachers' mindsets about their teaching ability. He studied the idea of whether or not teachers believed teaching was an innate ability, or an attribute that they could learn and improve on over time. Gero found that teachers with a growth mindset valued learning over labels such as good teacher or one who made mistakes (Dweck, 2015). They felt that teaching was a valuable and noble profession and it was worth taking risks to become better at it than not (Dweck, 2015). Teachers with a growth mindset were quick to engage in professional development, observe other more experienced teachers, and more importantly ask for feedback (Dweck, 2015). Teachers with a fixed mindset feared judgment from colleagues and others. They did not like to expose possible weaknesses and therefore did not engage in collaborative activities (Dweck, 2015).

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts and Variable

An overview of the IB Program.

In 1968, John Goormaghtigh founded the IB organization that is a non-profit educational organization (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The Diploma Program (DP) was the first program put in place, followed by the Middle Years Program (MYP), and the Primary Years Program (PYP), (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The IBO introduced the Career Related Program (CP) in 2012. The CP includes apprenticeships and preparing students for future employment opportunities (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Over 4,000 schools worldwide implement the IB program (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). These schools employ over 70,000 educators and educate over one million students worldwide (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The IBO has to authorize a school as an IB World School (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Schools are candidate schools before they receive authorization. After authorization, schools are visited and re-evaluated every five years to ensure that the standards and practices of the program are consistently implemented (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The IB program celebrates the ways people work together and can construct their meaning in the teaching and learning environment (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). The constructivist approach employed leads to democratic classrooms that encourage independent and life-long learning philosophies (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Learners in the IB program receive their education in

a global context and inquiry, action, and reflection are the driving forces that support learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The IB program promotes the development of international mindedness as well as global citizenship in its students (Doerksen, 2012). Schools strive for rigor through inquiry-based learning and seek to develop students who are life-long learners (Doerksen, 2012). IB is holistic in its approach to education and utilizes the constructivist method that allows students to take control of their learning by constructing their own meaning of new information and new concepts taught (Doerksen, 2012). Under the IB program, students engage in authentic, real world related and globally applicable learning (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Jones (2014) noted that modeling and coaching outcomes in the IB learning environment are essential. Learning, therefore, has to be authentic, cultivated, and shaped in the IB classroom.

There are several different characteristics and attitudes that the program stresses and encourages students and teachers to embody. These include being creative, open-minded, inquiring, tolerant, principled, and respectful (Doerksen, 2012). The IB curriculum framework features six transdisciplinary themes or units of inquiry (UOI) that individual schools adapt and adjust based on their unique needs (Jamal, 2016). There is no set way to establish the themes and schools, therefore, have to find creative and effective ways to merge their local standards and common core standards with the six IB unit themes (Jamal, 2016). Each unit is around 6 to 8 weeks long and includes, How We Express Ourselves, Sharing the Planet, Who We Are, How the World Works, How We Organize Ourselves, and Where We are in Place and Time (Jamal, 2016). The program

also centers on eight fundamental concepts that include, form, function, causation, reflection, perspective, and responsibility (Doerksen, 2012). Transdisciplinary themes are also an essential driving force of the PYP planner. These themes include social skills, communication skills, research skills, and thinking skills (Doerksen, 2012).

At the fifth grade level, students engage in an exhibition that is a culmination of their PYP years (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Students are placed in groups by teachers based on their topic preference, and each group is assigned a mentor who may be a teacher, administrator, parent, or school volunteer (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017). Students then engage in a 6 to 8 week inquiry-based research project and display their new learning and action plan on a set day and time. This showcase is the fifth grade PYP Exhibition (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The PYP branch of IB is a transdisciplinary framework; is holistic, and emphasizes the development of the whole child and inquiry (Jones, 2016). Within PYP schools, the administrator and the IB coordinator drive the program and oversee its implementation while attempting to manage and resolve challenges (Jones, 2016). The idea behind the development of the PYP was to provide students 3-12 with an international-minded education and a continuity of learning for IB program participants. Students would be able to move through the PYP, MYP, and DP programs without interrupting their IB learning and practices (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The PYP program framework has three main sections. The written curriculum explains what students will be learning, the taught curriculum describes how teachers will implement and interpret the standards and practices, and the assessed curriculum describes effective assessment practices within the program (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The first IB school in the United States opened in 1971 and IB has maintained a presence in the United States since that time (Meadows, 2017). In 2007, during the State of the Union Address, President George W. Bush gave recognition to the IB program that gave credibility to the program (Limtiaco, 2015). District leaders began taking a closer look at IB in their quest for new and innovative strategies to help with education reform (Limtiaco, 2015). With the implementation of the NCLB policy, AYP, and the current common core standards, leaders have the responsibility of employing rigorous, holistic, and creative curricula that will meet the needs of each child (Limtiaco, 2015). The IB program has since grown immensely in the United States with now over 2200 schools employing the PYP, MYP, DP, or CP programs, a combination of programs, or all programs (International Baccalaureate Organization, 2017).

The IBPYP program focuses on the early years and the practice of inquiry-based learning (Coppersmith, 2013). In using the IB framework, teachers have to become action oriented and reflective practitioners (Coppersmith, 2013). Coppersmith (2013) noted that for teachers to be successful in inquiry-based practices, they had to be willing to change their traditional ways of thinking about teaching and learning and had to develop more skills and knowledge in the area of inquiry-based instruction.

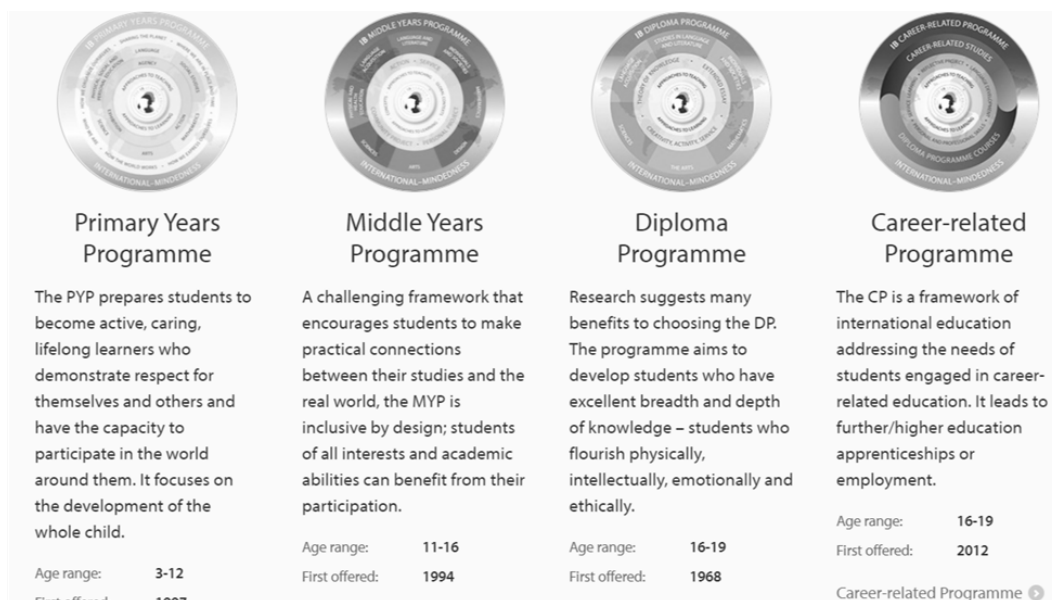


Figure 1. IB programs. From the IBO.org (2020)

Challenges with the utilization of the IB Program

Many underperforming schools due to NCLB of 2012 chose to adopt the IB model as a way to provide positive school reform (Crowell, 2013). The academic strength of the program indicated to school stakeholders that the IB model would be able to strengthen and support struggling students as well as prepare them for high stakes tests (Crowell, 2013). The United States federal government recognized the potential impact the IB program could have on education reform in the U.S. and therefore provided the IB chapter of North America with a two million dollar grant for program expansion in Title I and magnet schools (Crowell, 2013). Consequently, because of the need for education reform, as well as NCLB, and school leaders' efforts to transform education in American public schools, the IBO has seen an influx of IB authorization applications from United States public schools (Crowell, 2013).

The number of IB authorized schools, over two thousand, has been steadily growing for the past decade in the United States. This has also led to an increase in research on the implementation of the IB program and some of the challenges stakeholders may face during program implementation (Crowell, 2013).

According to Buckley (2016), any new instructional reform program will have challenges for teachers, students, and all other stakeholders. Teachers not only have to switch instructional practices from traditional to more constructivist practices, but they also have to acquire new content knowledge, assessment methods, instructional techniques, and new ways of thinking about teaching and learning (Buckley, 2016). Students also undergo a mindset shift in their beliefs about teaching and learning. They have to become more international-minded thinkers, collaborate more closely with peers, take more ownership of their education, and think more deeply about complex issues (Buckley, 2016).

The introduction of new programs may meet with the challenges of finding and retaining highly qualified staff as well as providing them with the training and support that is necessary for the success of the new program (Buckley, 2016). Teachers are the first line of defense in the educational arena, and they usually bear the burden or punishment of students' success or failure (Buckley, 2016). It is therefore essential to note that the more supported teachers are in the reform effort, the more successful the program will be (Burton, 2012).

Pascoe (2016) conducted a study that examined effective practices to address IB program challenges. This instrumental case study focused on discovering the barriers and

challenges for successful IB Diploma Program introduction and utilization. The study focused on five IBDP schools in Michigan and interviews, document review, and a rating scale were data collection sources. Some of the findings of the study included a lack of awareness of the IB program by stakeholders. Teachers felt uninformed, and this led to a negative perception of the program (Pascoe, 2017). The rate of implementation and utilization occurred quickly leaving little time for communication regarding the benefits of the program. Stakeholders felt there was not adequate communication regarding the program, and they had no time to absorb and reflect on the information given to be able to make an informed decision regarding program practice (Pascoe, 2017). A lack of staff buy-in also led to barriers to successful program use with some teachers being pro-IB and others anti-IB (Pascoe, 2017). The lack of staff buy-in created a ripple effect, and students detected staff negativity. Students, therefore, displayed negativity towards the program and this led to challenges of the program's success during its early years (Pascoe, 2017).

Other challenges noted included: negative student and staff perception, lack of preparation for program implementation and continuous use alongside state and local curricula, lack of staff input, student misconceptions, increased workload, need for increased rigor and commitment, lack of time for collaboration among teachers and IB coordinator (Pascoe, 2017).

The research results indicated that successful integration of the program would occur when teachers participated in IB workshops (Pascoe, 2017). However, if all teachers were unable to participate in these workshops, then aspiring teacher leaders

would train others in professional learning groups. The professional development session is one way of getting teachers to collaborate with each other, share resources, and increase participation from teachers who are not on board with the IB program model (Pascoe, 2017).

Meadows (2017) also conducted a qualitative case study that explored the adoption and use of the IB program in a rural high school. The study identified six areas for successful program integration and additionally examined the process specific to IB program practice, the perceptions of the teachers and IB coordinator, and their academic experiences during the program implementation process. Focus groups, interviews, and archival documentation were data collection sources (Meadows, 2017). The study identified core components of successful program integration, including qualified staff selection, pre-service and in-service training, administrative and district support as well as on-going coaching (Meadows, 2017). These core components are also transferable to IB program implementation and practice in schools (Meadows, 2017). Along with the core components, there are four critical elements to successful program integration and practice. These include community involvement in the selection and evaluation of the program and its traditions, on-going training and coaching for instructional staff, and necessary infrastructure, resources and support from state and federal entities (Meadows, 2017).

The results of the study showed that staff selection played a significant role in the success or lack thereof of the program in schools. Training for staff and continued mentoring were essential to study participants and were necessary for consistency of

program practice (Meadows, 2017). Although training is vital for the successful and efficient use of the IB program standards and practice, the research found that even with adequate training, it is difficult to teach some skills and this, therefore, makes staff selection more complicated (Meadows, 2017). These skills include common sense, ethics, social justice, the willingness to learn, and sound judgment (Meadows, 2017). These skills are necessary for IB practitioners to possess because of the philosophical components of the program and the constructivist framework in which the Program is grounded (Meadows, 2017).

Limtiaco (2015) examined a district's adoption of the IB program in its K-12 schools. The research identified challenges as well as successful broader strategies employed during program implementation and practice. Three schools participated in the study. Similar to Meadows (2017) and (Pascoe 2016), Limtiaco found that there were some familiar challenges that teachers faced in their use of the program. These included a lack of resources, insufficient knowledge on the part of teachers, and uncertainty on how to merge local and state standards with the IB program standards and practices (Limtiaco, 2015).

Catherine Doerksen (2012) carried out a phenomenological study to explore elementary teachers' perceptions and beliefs of the IBPYP. Seventeen teachers in an IBPYP school participated in the research and interviews with study participants was the primary source of data collection. Participants revealed that collaboration became stronger among faculty members, but similar to other research conducted, Doerksen (2012) identified a lack of professional development. Other participants also identified a

lack of knowledge about the program being a barrier at first, but their perceptions began to change gradually as they consistently practiced the program in their school (Doerksen, 2012).

Cook (2015) conducted a mixed methods study to examine teachers' perception of the IBPYP program through the lens of professional development. Cook discovered that some challenge areas in the active practice of the program were similar to previous studies conducted. One challenge area was the complexity of the PYP, or its abstract nature. Teachers utilizing the program had to become familiar with the new vocabulary, the standards, and practices associated with the program as well as construct their meaning of the program, which challenged their previous beliefs and notions about teaching and learning (Cook, 2015). Another challenging area was the change in roles. The teacher's role changed from expert to facilitator or mentor. Students had to embrace their learning and attempt to think more critically and globally (Cook, 2015). Other participants cited additional planning time and consistent professional development as necessities for the success of the program in schools (Cook, 2015).

Jamal's (2016) critical review of the IB program highlighted the idea that the IB program does not adequately provide teachers with guidance on active program practice and teachers, therefore, are more reluctant to implement the program's standards and practice with fidelity. The annual cost of the IB program for accredited schools as well as evaluation visits and professional development may all serve as barriers to the sustainability of the program (Jamal, 2016). The traditional, didactic way of teaching does not work with IB and teachers, therefore, have to have a more open-minded

approach to facilitate inquiry-based learning. Jamal (2016) therefore, posits that teacher selection/recruitment has to be intentional in order for IB schools to determine if teachers will be able to adapt to and uphold the standards and practices of the IB program.

Jones (2015) also noted that although teachers were aware of the standards and methods of the IB program, they taught them in a superficial way. Interviews conducted revealed that teachers once again did not feel adequately prepared and materials and resources did not sufficiently address the standards and practices found in the framework (Jones, 2015). Teachers, who therefore needed more guidance and a concrete roadmap to utilize the IB framework effectively, struggle with the abstract nature of the program (Jones, 2015).

Teachers' Perception of the IB Program

According to Alford (2013), the use of the IB program has dramatically increased in the United States. Although much of the current research studies conducted examine the perceptions of former students, more research has begun to emerge by former doctoral students regarding teachers' perceptions of not only IB but also the IB program implementation and practice process (Solsis, 2015).

The IB program employs inquiry-based learning and according to Solsis (2015), for student learning to improve, traditional teaching practices and teaching professional development practices have to transform. District administrators, teachers, and parents who are aware of the IB program understand the value of the program and are willing to adopt the IB model to engage students and stimulate education reform (Cook, 2017). Colleges and universities also offer college credits to students who have completed IB

Diploma programs because of its strong reputation (Cook, 2017) and because the performance of IB graduates makes them attractive to colleges and universities (Saxton and Hill, 2014).

Although the program has reported to be successful by many schools that have adopted it, teachers still face challenges in their practice of the program. Teachers in IB schools have reported that it is challenging to teach IB courses because they encounter problems when they attempt to adjust the curriculum to meet their teaching needs (Cook, 2017). Cook (2017) cited comments from some research participants who said that "the shift to teaching an IBDP course requires a heavy commitment of time, content knowledge, and creativity on the part of the teacher" (p. 5). The study also cited that there is still a gap in the research on the impact of IB program on teachers (Cook, 2017).

The IB framework is a constructivist model and teachers have to be willing to change their traditional views on teaching and learning in order to use the IB framework efficiently (Basturk, 2016). Teachers' preconceived ideas about teaching and learning evolve based on their experiences and the ways in which they construct meaning from their experiences (Basturk, 2016). They, therefore, need to receive the training and mentoring necessary for them to construct new ways of making meaning and develop new skills and knowledge (Basturk, 2016). McGowan (2016) noted that teachers' understandings affect their choices in how they carry out instruction and teach concepts. Therefore, if teachers' understandings and beliefs align to the content, then they would show more enthusiasm and carry out instruction with greater fidelity (McGowan, 2016).

Cook (2017) conducted a phenomenological study to explore the impact of the implementation and practice of the IBDP on IB teachers in Southern California high schools that had adopted the IBDP within the past six years. Cook uncovered several factors that affected teachers' perception of the program. Their concerns were the cost of professional development, finding motivated and qualified teachers, ensuring a culture of inclusion, and providing support for at-risk students (Cook, 2017). Cook indicated that student success directly tied to teachers' confidence in their content knowledge and their ability to deliver instruction successfully and accurately (Cook, 2017). However, teachers who lacked confidence in the delivering of IB content did not produce positive student results (Cook, 2017). Cook (2017) went on to note that the lack of confidence is probably a result of the lack of teacher training on the IB program and its instructional model.

Burton (2012) noted that professional development is critical to successful integration and practice of the IB program. Job-embedded professional development is essential in supporting and sustaining pedagogical change; provides valuable content knowledge, effective instructional practices to enhance student learning, and meaningful and relevant content experiences (Burton, 2012). Without adequate training teachers are more likely to fall back on traditional instructional practices (Burton, 2012). They will also lack the confidence necessary for successful delivery of the IB model (Burton 2012).

Glass (2016) noted that merely finding teachers with experience and in-depth knowledge of the IB program is a constant challenge for schools. Many interviewees admit that they did not know much about the IB program; and had not heard of the program until the job interview. Administrators acknowledge that it takes a long time for

teachers new to IB to become entirely comfortable with consistently utilizing the program, and when these teachers leave, the process of hiring new teachers who will commit to the active practice of the IB standards begins again (Glass, 2016). Educators interviewed in the Glass (2016) study also cited concerns regarding state and local curricula and, therefore, being unable to adequately integrate the IB standards and practice framework (Glass, 2016).

Cook (2015) sought to examine the perspectives of IBPYP educators as well as their initial views of the PYP, and how and why their opinions gradually changed over time. The study was a mixed methods study that employed focus groups and online surveys for data collection (Cook, 2015). The survey yielded responses from over 71 different countries with over 27% of respondents having 11-15 years teaching experience, and 40% have 6-10 years of PYP experience (Cook, 2015). The study revealed that initially, over 40% of participants had unfavorable views of the program, but their opinions eventually changed and almost 60% of participants currently hold favorable opinions of the program (Cook, 2015). Many participants cited that professional development helped to further their understanding of the program as well as collaboration with 'expert' colleagues (Cook, 2015). Learning on the job was necessary to PYP educators because it offered the opportunity to experiment, take risks, make mistakes, learn from those mistakes, and make adjustments as needed (Cook, 2015). Those who are still grappling with the challenges of the program cited several problem areas such as the complexity of the standards and practice as was mentioned previously. They also cited

integrating state and local standards with the unit of inquiry, time for planning, teaching English Learners, and changes to assessment practices (Cook, 2015).

Coppersmith (2013) looked at teachers' perceptions and practices of inquiry in an elementary IB school. This study employed a mixed methods approach and identified several areas of IB framework. The areas included, curriculum planning and collaboration, a community of practice, PYP assessments, teacher-designed learning activities, and evidence of inquiry in the classroom. Study participants identified several areas that served as barriers to the practical use of the program, including time constraints, student characteristics, and classroom culture (Coppersmith, 2013). Study participants also identified lack of resources and training as barriers to their efficient and consistent use and practice of the program.

Similarly, Glass' (2016) study participants also identified a lack of support, specifically district support as a challenge as it seemed that the district office was only concerned with test scores and that administrators were unaware of how the IB program works. Without adequate training, teachers could not understand the rationale for using the program as well as how to use the program efficiently (Coppersmith, 2013). Books and adequate technology are also necessities for students to be able to carry out independent research. (Coppersmith, 2013).

Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this review was to help readers understand the use of the IBPYP program, the challenges teachers face, and their perception of the program. It is clear from the research that although the program has immense benefits for students and

education, there are challenges associated with the program that need further examination. It is also important to note that there are gaps in the literature regarding the IB program, specifically the Primary Years Program. The only 'experts' on the subjects with significant research is the IB organization that for obvious reasons may not be a reliable source. Most of the current studies I examined came from doctoral students who found different aspects of the IB program worth investigating and put forward new theories regarding the program. It is, therefore, essential for me to lend a new voice to the subject of IB specifically PYP, teacher challenges, and teacher perceptions of the program. This research may shed more light on the underlying issues of program practice and allow all stakeholders to make improvements necessary for the continued success of the program.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Research Methodology and Design

I decided to conduct a qualitative study for this research project because qualitative research is concerned with how people construct an understanding of their experiences and, knowledge creation, and form perceptions (Goodyear, 2014). The use of the qualitative process will allow me to examine personal narratives, life stories, and experiences in context. The research design for this qualitative study will be a bounded case study. This research will be a single site case study as the primary data collection method will be participant interviews. Case studies are wide-ranging in scope, and they can focus on small groups and document the experiences of participants within the group (Creswell, 2012). Data and information gathering in a single site case study can be done using multiple participants from the site which makes information gathering more feasible for the researcher (Creswell, 2012). This section outlines in detail the research methodology and methods applied in this study. The key components of this section includes the research design, the role of the researcher, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis. The following research questions will guide this study:

RQ1: What challenges do teachers face as they employ the IBPYP framework?

RQ2: How do the challenges that teachers face affect their perception of the IBPYP program?

RQ3: Do the challenges IBPYP educators face impact their ability to effectively utilize the program and its standards?

Research Design and Rationale

According to Creswell (2012), a case study is a bounded system used to examine or explore activities, processes, or individuals in an in-depth way. Case studies are one form of qualitative research that is appropriate for reviewing a modern-day, real-world phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when there are no clear boundaries between the event and its meaning (Laukner, Paterson, & Krupa, 2012). By using case studies, researchers have the ability to explore complex situations, gather multiple perspectives from research participants, including contextual information (Laukner et al. 2012). I chose to employ this design because it would give me the flexibility to gather a more detailed in-depth understanding of the problem as well as the teachers' perspective on the issue.

Case studies have several advantages and limitations. Case studies explore real-world experiences, offer insights and expand understanding in a meaningful way. The rich, thick, detailed descriptions provide a holistic picture of the phenomenon or issue being studied (Merriam, 2009). One limitation could be that the depth of the study and the length of its findings may be too much for readers to digest (Merriam, 2009). Another limitation may be that the researcher has to mainly rely on his or her instincts and abilities which will call the researcher's integrity and biases or lack thereof into play (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Role of the Researcher

Considering my role as a qualitative researcher is essential because I am presenting as an expert in the subject area that I am studying. As a researcher, I also influence the research in one way or another. During the data collection process, a relationship is established, however short term, between the researcher and participants and this relationship has the ability to influence the research and findings in some way. I therefore made my research as transparent as possible and I acknowledged my subjectivity. I have been an educator for over 20 years. I worked at the study site for 10 years as an IBPYP teacher and coordinator, assistant principal and, subsequently, the interim principal. I chose this location because of my history with the school and my first-hand knowledge of the challenges teachers face as they utilize the IBPYP. My use of a qualitative case study design is justified because of my previous connection with the study site and the problem I am examining. My personal biases, however, should be minimal as I no longer affiliate with the school and I no longer hold a supervisory position over potential study participants.

Methodology

Qualitative methodology involves data that presents in a descriptive way through written or spoken words in addition to observed behavior (Taylor, Bogdan, and DeVault, 2016). Qualitative researchers must set aside their own views of the world in order to understand the meaning other people attach to their lived experiences (Taylor et al., 2016). Qualitative research is inductive in nature and the researcher's job is to develop their own theories or identify emerging patterns or themes based on the data collected

(Taylor et al., 2016). Qualitative researchers operate within a broad theoretical framework while looking at people, settings, and experiences in a holistic way.

One major difference between quantitative and qualitative research is within the data collection process. Quantitative data collection involves collecting large samples selected randomly while qualitative data collection is on a smaller scale and purposeful in nature. Small sample sizes may negatively influence a quantitative study and may present as a weakness in the quantitative data collection process. However, a small sample size is desirable to qualitative researchers and is beneficial to the qualitative data collection process (Taylor et al., 2016). The rationale for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data also differs (Taylor et al., 2016).

During the data collection process, qualitative researchers are able to utilize purposeful sampling. Samples develop when fieldwork begins and are theoretically driven and evolutionary. Purposeful sampling also allows the researcher to work with small groups of people in their natural setting (Taylor et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling is beneficial in achieving consistency in data such as the setting, individuals, and activities. Purposeful sampling can compare, identify, and highlight differences that the researcher may find between the setting and individuals. The sampling ensures a heterogeneous population that will assist in variety and a more accurate conclusion that the researcher can draw from the data (Taylor et al., 2016).

Participant Selection

In this case, I examined an elementary school in the southeastern part of the United States that uses the IBPYP. The case study included interviews conducted with 18 elementary teachers including the IBPYP coordinator. Each participant had varying degrees of experience with the IBPYP. Participant selection was the result of purposeful sampling that included beginning teachers, mid-career teachers and teachers nearing retirement. This process of purposeful sampling ensures that the study represents a variety of subjects, and the researcher is able to expand their theory in a productive, thick, descriptive way (Merriam, 2009).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Recorded interviews with study participants was used to gather data because through interviews I was able to collect historical information. Creswell (2009) notes that information collected about a subject matter is information that the study participant will be privy to or have intimate knowledge. The researcher is also able to control the lines of questioning (Creswell, 2009). Interviews may be limiting if the researcher does not have adequate listening skills or the study participant may reveal private information which the researcher will not be able to publish (Creswell, 2009).

Before data collection began, I had to obtain approval from the IRB and written consent from study participants. I asked the principal's permission to come in during a faculty meeting to introduce myself to the faculty, outline my research; and what I hope to accomplish. I prepared a packet of information to hand to the staff that included an introductory letter, invitation to participate in the study, and a consent form. Study

participants received pseudonyms. Data collection took place over a three-week period via telephone interviews scheduled at the teacher's convenience. Participants received information that the interviews would be recorded for transcription and analysis. I kept field notes during the interviews to keep track of questions and responses that may need follow-up questions. Field notes were both descriptive and reflective. Descriptive field notes were my attempt to be as objective as possible, so I recorded everything in detail that I heard. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that descriptive field notes should include a portrait of interview participants, description of physical settings, reconstruction of dialogue, accounts of particular events, and my behavior. In addition to the descriptive notes, my own reflections were also important. My reflective field notes included inadequacies, mistakes, prejudices, likes and dislikes. In order for me to produce a good study, it was important for me to self-reflect and keep an accurate record of my methods, procedures and analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

After collecting data from teacher interviews, the data was coded, analyzed, and interpreted to find emerging themes and patterns regarding teachers' perceptions of the IBPYP and the challenges they face. I examined the data to find meaning by examining emerging patterns. Analysis of the collected data occurred through inductive analysis.

Trustworthiness

One of the essential features of a qualitative study is trustworthiness. In order for a study to be considered trustworthy, it has to be dependable, credible, and transferable (Goodyear, 2014). The researcher has to be credible so that the research findings are dependable and trustworthy. The transferability of a study is the extent to which the findings or results of a qualitative study transfer or are generalized to other settings or contexts (Merriam, 2009). To ensure the transferability of a study, the researcher has to put specific procedures in place such as member checking, peer review, as well as an audit trail.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures are essential, and before the data collection process began, I acquired approval from Walden IRB. It was also imperative to receive permission from the participating school's principal because the school is an independent charter school. I had to submit a letter to the principal detailing my investigation, rationale, and a copy of the participant consent form. The consent form included, description of the study, purpose of the study, background information, voluntary nature of the study, guarantees of confidentiality to the participants, contacts and questions, and statement of consent.

Researchers must protect their study participants' identities. It is for this reason that each study participant received a pseudonym. Participants also received information indicating that their participation was voluntary and that they were able to withdraw anytime. They also received assurances that the data collected as well as consent forms

will be in secured storage where I am the only one with access. I will destroy data and consent forms after five years.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research design and methodology that this study employed. A qualitative research method operated in conjunction with a single site case study. Kalman (2019) compares qualitative research to an archaeological dig and the researcher is the archaeologist. As such, the researcher has the task of pursuing every lead in an attempt to find meaning from data collected and gaining insight into the phenomenon.

In chapter 3, I also outlined participant selection and procedures for recruitment, and data collection. Through purposeful sampling, I was able to identify and select study participants. The main objective was to identify participants who could closely relate to any challenges that IBPYP educators may face or provide another perspective to the issue at hand. For this reason, purposeful sampling was ideal. Study participants included eighteen elementary school teachers in an IBPYP authorized school. They each had varying degrees of experience as educators and with the IBPYP. Chapter 3 also included information regarding the data analysis plan, the study's trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 4: Reflections and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine and explore the IBPYP's challenges; and how these challenges shape teachers' perceptions of the IBPYP. I used a single case study to examine and explore educator's challenges and their perceptions as they utilized the IBPYP.

Chapter 4 includes an overview of the research questions, a description of the setting and demographics, the data collection and analysis process, and evidence of trustworthiness for this study. Findings presented were from the analysis of the participants' interview responses. The results are organized by emerging themes and their relationship to the research questions.

RQ1: What challenges do teachers face as they employ the IBPYP framework?

RQ2: How do the challenges teachers face affect their perception of the IBPYP program?

RQ3: Do the challenges the IB educators face impact their ability to effectively utilize the program and its standards?

Setting

The case study took place at an IBPYP authorized elementary school in the southeastern part of the United States. The IBPYP charter school serves over 400 students with almost 80% of the students coming from refugee or immigrant backgrounds. The initials LMS will reference the study site in order to disguise its identity as well as keep the identity of the participants confidential. I purposefully chose this site because I knew that it had a very diverse faculty and it had been an IBPYP

school for almost 12 years. This school was in a unique position to provide me with data that would be varied and significant to my study. I also have a past relationship with this organization as a teacher and administrator, but had moved on to a different school district 3 years prior to collecting data. I also learned that many of the previous staff had also moved on. It was because of the change in administration, faculty and staff that data collection progressed at this site.

Data Collection

In order to collect data, I had to await approval from The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University. My approval number is 08-15-19-0022100. The expiration date is August 14, 2020. After receiving approval, I revised the adult consent form to include my approval number and expiration date. Data collection included recruiting participants, acquiring their consent, and a structured interview that consisted of eight questions. The study population included 18 elementary teachers with experiences that ranged from 2 to 25 years. I contacted participants via their school email and after three to four email reminders, I finally received the number of participants I needed. In the email, I outlined the purpose of my study that was included in the invitation to participate along with an adult consent form. I made it clear that participation was not mandatory and those who did participate would remain anonymous.

After sending participants an electronic copy of the consent form, I asked that they read, sign, and return the consent form to me electronically before I could move forward with the interview. The consent form included the purpose of the study, the number of participants that were needed, the procedures that the researcher would

employ to collect data, sample questions that may be asked, the voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study, privacy, and no payments clause. Participants were encouraged to contact me if they had questions regarding the consent form. My contact information which included my email address and telephone number was provided in the consent form. Once I received the signed consent forms, I signed each form and returned a copy with my signature each participant. I had a few questions regarding the scheduling of interviews and clarification on exactly who the study will benefit.

Because I contacted the participants via their public school email, I did not need to receive permission from the school district, board, or school administration. I had originally hoped to gain letters of cooperation from the school so I could introduce myself in person and conduct face-to-face interviews. I was, however, unable to gain letters of cooperation and I therefore had to submit a change request to IRB in order to collect data via the teachers' public school email.

I chose purposeful sampling because the participants I hoped to collect data from had teaching experience in an IBPYP school, and would therefore be familiar with the IBPYP framework. I was also hoping to collect data from educators who were in different stages of their teaching career and would be able to provide different perspectives based on their lived experiences. These selection criteria ensured that teachers had the professional, academic background, and relevant IBPYP experiences needed to provide authentic and varying perspectives. The participants were elementary teachers from grades K-5 who all had varying degrees of experience and knowledge.

Table 1

Study Participants' Demographics

IB teacher gender	IB teacher ethnicity	IB teacher years in education	IB teacher grade level
Female	Caucasian	13 yrs.	4th
Female	Caucasian	13 yrs.	4th
Female	Caucasian	18 yrs.	3rd
Female	Caucasian	6 yrs.	2nd
Female	Caucasian	15 yrs.	Kindergarten
Female	Caucasian	17 yrs.	Kindergarten
Female	Black (Caribbean)	23 yrs.	3 rd
Female	African American	6 yrs.	3rd
Female	African American	5 yrs.	1st
Female	African American	2 yrs.	1st
Female	African American	25 yrs.	1st
Female	African American	11 yrs.	4th
Female	African American	23 yrs.	Kindergarten
Female	African American	17 yrs.	Kindergarten
Female	African American	4 yrs.	3rd
Female	Asian (East Indian)	19 yrs.	5th
Male	Caucasian (British)	23 yrs.	5th
Male	Caucasian	19 yrs.	5th

Participant interviews took place telephonically and each participant received a reminder that the interview would be audio recorded and the researcher may call again to ask follow up questions if necessary. The interviews were between 15 minutes and 35 minutes in length. The time spent with each participant varied according to his or her level of comfort, experience, and or knowledge of the IB program. Some participants needed more prompting and had to answer follow up questions at the time of the interview to expand on the information they were providing. I ensured that interviews occurred in a quiet space with a fully charged phone and a fully charged recording

device. A copy of the questions remained close by in order to record notes beside each question based on the participants' responses.

The interviews took place over a 3-week period because I had to work around participants' schedules. A few participants also had to reschedule which pushed back my data collection timeline. The majority of the interviews took place after six o'clock in the evening and a few transpired on the weekend. The interview questions were open ended and each participant had to answer the same questions. I would paraphrase or rephrase some questions for clarity, or expand the participants' response. The intended purpose of the interview questions was to explore the participant's years of teaching experience, experience with the IBPYP, their rationale for working in an IBPYP school, the challenges they face, and their overall perspective of the program.

Data Analysis

Once data collection concluded, a multistage data analysis protocol commenced. The first step was to assign simple codes to each participant's interview recording. Each recording was transcribed using Google Voice Typing tool. This process took five days to complete. The Google Voice Typing tool is a feature within Google Docs and with the click of the embedded microphone, an individual may dictate sentences and the transcription appears on the blank notepad. The Voice Typing tool required me to use the microphone and repeat word for word participants' statements. I dictated each interview into the microphone, and the information appeared in sentence form on a Word document. Some of the words, phrases, or whole sentences had to be manually type

written because the Google tool was not completely accurate in transcribing the dictated statements.

Once the transcriptions were completed, each participant received a copy for member checking. Each participant was satisfied with the transcribed text and made no edits to the text. I proceeded to read each transcript several times while identifying words, phrases, ideas, and or concepts that reoccurred multiple times during the interviews. Through this process, I was able to grow my understanding of the topic, create models, find relationships in the data, and the concepts while making links to the literature.

Coding is the first step in being able to build a picture of the data as well as make comparisons to different aspects of the data (Mayan, 2016). In order to begin the process of coding, I created a list of the emerging themes and then sought out a coding program to assist me in coding my data and to locate more themes and patterns. I utilized a free 2-week trial of the NVivo program that gave me access to all of the program's features. I had to learn how to use the program before uploading the transcribed data. The program auto coded the data to get code summaries, sentiment results, number of coding references, and theme results. The upcoming sections will include a discussion of the coded results.

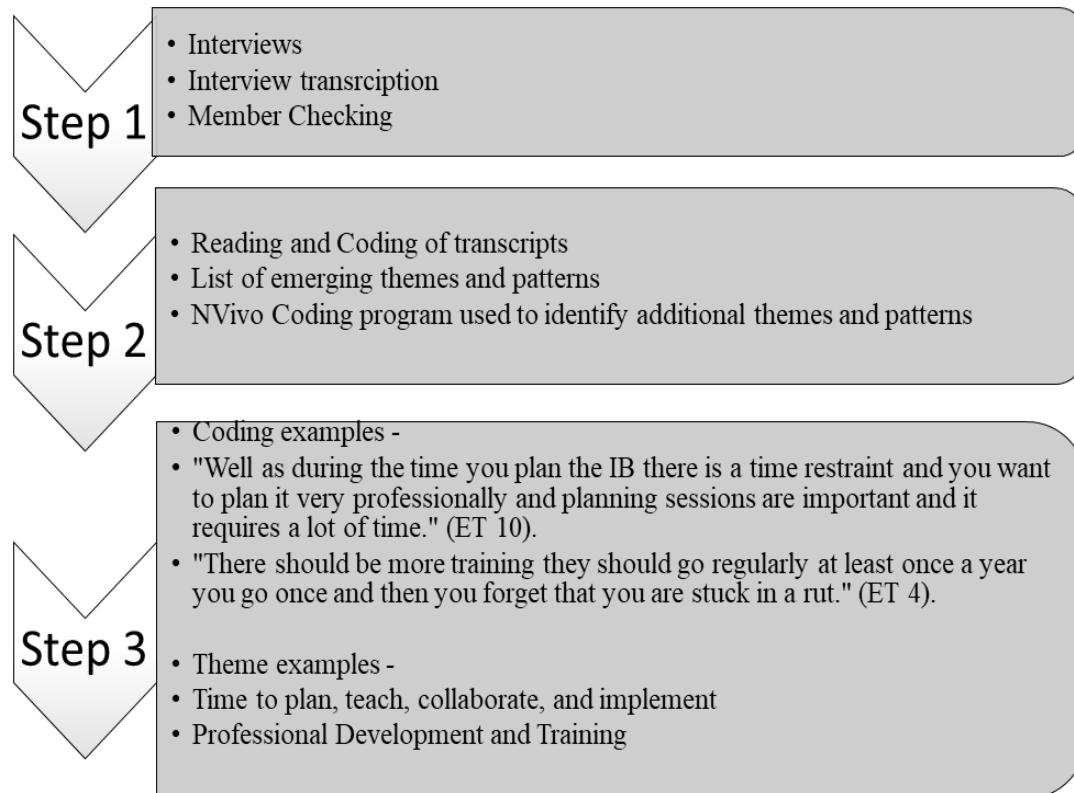


Figure 3: Data analysis process. The data analysis process used to conduct this study.

Results

Six major themes arose from the data analysis and coding. These themes included time, resources, training, curriculum, professional development, and planning. Seven transcripts which were coded mentioned the curriculum eight times, five documents mentioned professional development five times, five documents mentioned planning nine times, three documents mentioned resources six times, time was referenced 16 times in nine documents, and training was referenced six times in three documents. At least three analyzed documents mentioned mentor teacher and had some bearing on the issue of support that included training or professional development. This category was ultimately

not included in the data results simply because it ended up being around one percent of the interviewees who held this sentiment.

Table 2

Emerging Themes

C : Curriculum	D: Development	M: Planning	Q: Resources	Y : Time	Z : Training
Times Referenced 8	Times Referenced 5	Times Referenced 9	Times Referenced 7	Times Referenced 16	Times Referenced 6
curriculum	holistic development	planning sessions	resources	time	training
county curriculum	professional development	extra planning days	accurate resources	1st time	45 minutes training
PYP curriculum	professional development part	IB planners	electronic resources	couple times	enough training
regular curriculum planning	professional development	lesson plans	maybe resources	different times	hands-on training
state curriculum		planning base	particular resources	enough time	online training
		planning day	resources piece	full time	training
		planning planning time	sole resource	Place time Planning time	teachers training
		regular curriculum planning		set time	
				specified science time time difference time restraint	

Theme 1: Integration of the local state standards and the IBPYP curriculum

Of the 18 teachers interviewed, seven of them referenced the curriculum 8 times in answer to the interview question: What challenges do you face or did you face as you utilize or utilized the program? The study participants' references to the curriculum pertained to the IBPYP curriculum and state and local curriculum.

The design and practice of inquiry-based oriented curriculum takes time to plan and implement. Additionally, the planning and implementation of local and state curriculum standards are also time consuming (Coppersmith, 2013). It is therefore challenging when educators attempt to integrate both the IBPYP standards and their state and local standards.

According to elementary teacher 13 (ET 13) after only being in the program for one year it was especially confusing trying to integrate the IBPYP program framework with the local and state curriculum standards. ET 13 said, "It felt confusing in terms of what was to be taught, what should be integrated and what should stand alone. Just trying to bring it all together for the kids and not having to guess." ET 14 expressed the same sentiments as it pertained to integrating different standards from the local curriculum with the IB units. The participant stated that even after 10 years in an IBPYP school it was still difficult to IB integrate topics and subject matter with local state topics and subject matter. While some topics have to remain as a stand-alone concept, others are easier to integrate within the IB units. ET 7 explained it this way, "There is always conflict between teaching to the IBPYP and the standards of the state. At times you would find

that there are content that can be integrated easily, but most times there are stand-alone content.”

Theme 2: Time to plan, teach, collaborate, and implement

The second theme, time, was referenced in nine transcripts 16 times. The interviewed participants stated that time was a big challenge for them because it took time to plan, implement, and teach the local school curriculum especially with the added component of integrating the IBPYP framework.

Time or lack of sufficient time also affected the teachers’ ability to get involved in professional development, network with each other, and develop the IB program planners with fidelity. ET 10 noted that, “the biggest challenge was to really have the time to plan and execute the plan with fidelity. The time to plan also includes gathering resources that we need to serve the kids well.” According to ET 3, “You never have enough time to get stuff done. There would always be a mad scramble after Christmas to get all the units completed.” ET 5 felt that during the year, a lot of time and energy is required to plan IB curriculum units; and teachers want to do it “professionally.” However, there is a time restraint. Because of the time constraint, other teachers are also unable to get involved with the planning of the curriculum. These teachers are unable to join the collaborative process that is essential to the integration of the IB framework. Connection and collaboration are important skills that teachers need to utilize regularly in order to support the teaching and learning process (Payne, 2018). To encourage viewpoints and engage in critical thinking skills, teachers must collaborate with each other (Payne, 2018).

Teachers of subjects such as art, music, and physical education are valuable resources when planning an IBPYP unit, but the time when planning takes place for each grade level may conflict with the special area teachers' planning times. This, therefore, serves as a barrier to effective collaboration between general classroom teachers and special area teachers.

ET 7 discussed time in the sense of number of hours in which to teach. According to ET 7,

“Because of the limited time we have throughout the day, some of the stand alone standards had to be left out and most times it was part of the IBPYP curriculum because the big push was for more of the state standards to be taught.”

Theme 3: Professional Development and Training

The theme of professional development emerged as a theme because five different participants made five references to professional development. The references came when answering the interview questions: What challenges do you face or did you face as you utilize or utilized the program? Why do you believe these challenges exist or existed? How do you believe you could overcome these challenges or how did you overcome these challenges? Similarly, the theme of training also emerged when other participants responded to the same questions.

Training and or professional development was important for new teachers and veteran teachers. Professional development is important since teachers since they are change agents and therefore should engage in on going learning opportunities (Lakhwani, 2019). It is important for teachers to stay current on new research based teaching

strategies and learning resources to grow as learners. Professional development has to not only provide teachers with new knowledge or extend existing knowledge, but to address challenges teachers may face (Lakhwani, 2019).

One type of professional development that is beneficial to IB educators is the leveled training that takes place mainly in the summer. Training for teachers is a compulsory exercise that allows the teacher to develop pedagogic competencies (Lakhwani, 2019). Effective training provides teachers with the skills necessary to carry develop and implement effective teaching and learning experiences for students (Lakhwani, 2019). The training that takes place during the summer and offered through the Center for the Advancement and Study of International Education (CASIE) organization on behalf of the IBO is necessary in providing the skills needed for IB educators to be effective.

Both training and professional development were linked together because all of the participants who mentioned training or professional development did not distinguish between the two and it seems the terminologies were being use synonymously by each participant. The participants when pressed for further explanation did not view training as different from professional development and used both terms interchangeably.

Study participants who referenced training and professional development felt they received some training at the beginning of the school year and tried to gather additional resources such as going to the IBO website to gather more information. They, however still experienced some confusion on exactly how to implement the standards and

practices of the program alongside the local and state standards or what should the IB units look like in each teacher's classroom.

ET 1 with only two years of experience with the IBPYP felt that "A lack of experience made it a little more difficult especially in the first year and consistent professional development would have been helpful in the first year and as well as now."

ET 15 felt that "a little more training and probably being able to see other teachers in action using the program in their classrooms" would have been helpful. ET 2 felt that there should be more training and that teachers should be able to go to more than once per year. ET 3 who has 11 years of experience with the IBPYP felt that more training is important so teachers know what they were doing. According to ET 3, it was not until his participation in the level 3 course that he understood more about IBPYP than any other course. ET 4 uses the IBO website when possible but feels that it is not a very user-friendly site since the information is not well organized. ET 4 stated that she did not feel comfortable using the IBO because the information was too scattered. Both elementary teachers felt that face-to-face training and professional development was more beneficial or can be more beneficial to PYP educators. ET 7 also felt that training would be beneficial but since it is not free, teachers do not have consistent access to workshops that the IBO offers. ET 8 indicated that the IBPYP looked different in every school and it was up to the school, administrators, and teachers to make the program their own; add their "own flavor." However, with only local school training, the burden fell on the teachers and sometimes the effort required to utilize the program with fidelity was not present.

Theme 4 Resources for effective teaching and learning

The idea of resources emerged several times during participant interviews and three interview transcripts made reference to resources six times. Participants stated that resources were important for educators to be able to utilize the program with fidelity. Resources for different participants were either monetary, classroom supplies, or readymade IBPYP materials.

Some teachers see the classroom demands as more challenging when sufficient resources are unavailable. In an inquiry-based teaching and learning environment, teachers relinquish their role as teachers and become facilitators or coaches (Glass, 2016). When students are actively engaged in a student-centered environment, the teacher has to provide instructional tools that will allow students to experience real world authentic problem solving exercises (Glass, 2016). As such, schools and school districts have the burden of providing teachers with the necessary materials necessary for the inquiry-based learning that is germane to the IB framework (Glass, 2016).

One participant noted that teachers would have to purchase supplies on their own or ask parents to purchase needed materials (ET 13, 2019). Another participant also noted that there were resources on the IBO website, but the organization of the information found on the IBO website is not user-friendly. This made the information difficult to sift through and it was difficult for teachers to adapt the materials they found to their student demographic (ET 13, 2019). The participant also noted that, “.....bottom line, if there isn’t sufficient funding for teachers to participate in trainings, then resources would be hard to come by and most times are financed by teachers,” (ET 13, 2019). Participant (ET

10) also stated that because of the lack of sufficient monetary resources, professional development for IBPYP was infrequent especially because some of the offered courses took place in a different state or out of the country. Yet another participant (ET 5) explained that resources were available through readymade kits offered by the IBO with lessons and resources for educators, but because of financial limitations, the school is unable to invest in these resources.

Theme 5 Collaborative planning and unit plans

Planning was mentioned several times and although it could have been incorporated with the theme of time, I decided to treat them as different entities based on the information provided by interviewed participants. The majority of the participants who mentioned time also mentioned planning and vice versa. There were, however, subtle differences that made mention of executing the IBPYP with fidelity in addition to planning units in a timely manner to be better able to incorporate the different standards. This will also allow time for different culminating activities that need to occur at the completion of each unit.

One participant suggested that ideally, the development of plans should take place before the school year begins and during the year, teachers will only need to make adjustments as necessary. This, however, does not always happen due to time constraints that makes it difficult to get everyone together over the summer to plan. Additionally, when new teachers are involved they may not have sufficient understanding of the program for them to participate effectively. There is also the challenge of getting everyone on the same page to agree on the central idea, language of the unit, and

standards that can be paired is "...a little like ordering a pizza" (ET 4, 2019). "It becomes complicated when there are four or five individuals involved and they each want a different "topping," (ET 4, 2019). The planning process can therefore become very time consuming and sometimes if things are not put in place correctly, it becomes a disaster and the team has to start all over again.

Participants also indicated that not having a team leader who possess sufficient knowledge of the program also becomes a hindrance to the planning process. Many times this issue would lead to no planning meetings or a lack luster planning session. When this happened, the IB unit's implementation would lack passion and commitment and it became difficult to redirect teachers' time and energy. Often time teachers would become discouraged and would no longer want to invest the time necessary for effective IB unit plans.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a very vital component of the research process especially qualitative research. If a study is trustworthy, then it is valuable, rigorous, reliable, credible, and applicable (Meriam, 2009). In order for my data to be trustworthy, I ensured that my study had several components. These components include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Leavy, 2014).

Credibility

Credibility and trustworthiness are important factors to consider when collecting, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data (Leavy, 2014). The researcher has to be able to sell the story he or she is telling in a convincing way and therefore has to implement and utilize sound methodology which is just right for achieving the desired outcome (Leavy, 2014). Internal validity is another name assigned to the notion of credibility and its underlying premise of whether or not the findings are credible or realistic given the data that presented (Merriam, 2009).

Member checks after the initial transcription of the data was use to increase the credibility of my study. I had each participant review the transcript of their interview to establish the accuracy of their account. I directed each participant to read their transcript and make changes as necessary by emailing me their notes or edits. None of the participants made note of any changes. They each agreed that the transcript was accurate to their recollection and knowledge.

According to Creswell (2009), the use of rich, thick descriptions in conveying the researcher's findings, the setting, or providing varied perspective of an emergent theme may add validity to a researcher's findings. Clarifying researcher bias, presenting negative or discrepant information that contradicts the themes are important to the credibility of a research study (Creswell, 2009). Therefore having each participant member check his or her own transcript was important to the process of adding credibility to the research and research findings.

Follow up interviews were also conducted with four study participants. As I read through the data, coded, identified themes and quotes within each theme, the need for more clarification became apparent in regards to certain statements that each participant made in his or her original interview. Follow up interviews ensued with these participants. Each interview lasted less than 10 minutes.

Each participant had to verify his or her years of experience as a teacher and with the IBPYP. The term resources and the meaning it held for each participant was another area that was in need of more clarity. Participants stated that resources amounted to teaching materials, money, technology, and any materials that could help them in the classroom with the IB units of study.

Transferability

Transferability is the replacement term for external validity. Transferability assesses to what extent research findings are applicable or transferrable to other settings outside of the research site (Mayan, 2016). In order to make study results transferable, it is important that the research provide thick, rich description of the data and findings as well as pay careful attention to the study sample (Merriam, 2009).

In order to establish transferability, chapters 4 and 5 discuss the participants, the setting in which each interview took place, time of day and week for interviews, issues with scheduling for participants, and issues with the researcher's inability to gain access to the study site as was planned. The discussion also included sample size, recruitment strategy, interview questions, and participant demographics.

The use of purposeful sampling was to ensure the transferability of the study's findings because the study participants were unique to my research topic, but also typical in terms of what one would find in an IBPYP school in the United States. I provided detailed and rich descriptions of the study site, the participants, the data collection, and analysis procedures and the research findings as outlined by Mayan (2014).

Dependability

The term dependability is synonymous with reliability. Data results are dependable when the researcher adheres to the methodology implementation strategies that he or she developed. The researcher's approach or methodology has to be consistent with that of other researchers and previous projects (Creswell, 2009).

In order to address the issue of dependability each participant had an opportunity to review his or her transcript for accuracy. They also received a description of the steps and procedures I followed to collect, store, and analyze data. Interview protocols used with all participants were also included (see Appendix A).

Confirmability

The establishment of an audit trail by the researcher ensures confirmability of the research study. This trail should be easily accessible by others (Mayan, 2016). To address the issue of confirmability, I securely stored all data collected included recorded interviews and transcribed data. Data from interviews conducted were hand coded to discern themes and subthemes. A computer code program verified the hand coded themes as well as identified additional themes and patterns.

Summary

In chapter 4, I described the case setting, participants of the study, data analysis procedure, and data result. The coding techniques used and the themes which emerged from coding were described in detail. Six themes emerged from data analysis and these themes included, planning, time, professional development, training, the curriculum, and resources both material and monetary resources.

The findings suggest that there are multiple challenges that teachers face as they utilize the IBPYP standards in tandem with state and local standards. These challenges are frustrating to the educator and renders the educator powerless and less effective to carry out their duties. The participants, however, did not present themselves as defeated or hopeless because of the challenges they face. They each believe these issues or challenges are fixable and are rectifiable by administrators and or district leaders. Chapter 5 hosts a discussion of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The main goal of this case study was to illuminate and explore challenges that may be associated with the IBPYP and how these challenges shape teachers' perceptions of the IBPYP in a public elementary charter school located in the southeastern United States. The problem the study addressed is, teachers who utilize the IBPYP standards and practices face various challenges and these challenges shape their perceptions of the IB program (Cook, 2017, McGowan, 2016, Pascoe, 2017). The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

RQ1: What challenges do teachers face as they employ the IBPYP framework?

RQ2: How do the challenges that teachers face affect their perception of the IBPYP program?

RQ3: Do the challenges that teachers face affect their ability to effectively utilize the program and its standards?

In order to answer the above research questions, I studied an elementary school in the southeastern United States. This elementary school is an IBO authorized school and has been for more than 10 years. Additionally, the elementary school has been employing and practicing the IBPYP standards for over 17 years. In order to collect data, I employed purposeful sampling that yielded 18 teacher participants including the IB coordinator. Participant recruitment took place via the participants' school email.

The study sample participated in a semi-structured interview format. Although I utilized pre-determined questions, I also asked follow up questions of each participant based on the responses they provided. Each interview was over the phone and lasted

between 20 and 45 minutes. From the interview data, I was able to identify challenges teachers faced as they utilized the IBPYP program, how they overcame these challenges, and their overall perceptions of the IBPYP program. I transcribed each interview through the Google type tool and then reviewed the transcriptions for accuracy. Each participant received a copy of the transcribed interview to be member checked. Interviews were first hand-coded and then uploaded to the NVivo coding program. Analysis of emerging patterns ensued and a discussion of the six major themes discovered occurred in Chapter 4.

Interpretation of the Findings

The themes that emerged were in conjunction with the research questions that guided the study. These questions are as follows:

RQ 1: What challenges do teachers face as they employ the IBPYP framework?

The identified themes sought to answer the question aimed at finding out the challenges that educators faced as they utilized the IBPYP framework in their instructional practice. Such challenges included time, resources or lack thereof, planning, the curriculum, professional development and training.

Participants felt they had too little time to plan meaningful units that would effectively incorporate the local and state standards. The lack of sufficient planning time established a routine of teachers “touching base” with each other via text, email, or “chit chatting” in the hallway about the next unit and resources needed. Additionally, special area teachers who are vital participants in the planning of the units were never available due to scheduling conflicts and therefore could not provide valuable input or feedback to

the planning of IB units. The educators felt that this was a hindrance to the planning of IB units and an important element of the IBPYP standards and practice was missing. Study participants also discussed the fact that they may start the school year with the best of intentions, but as the year progressed, teachers had to complete added tasks, and time to plan units became more infrequent.

According to research participants, they have a good understanding of the constructivist nature of the IBPYP program and are willing to put in the time necessary to plan. Both veteran and new participants understand that there is no clear path to utilizing the IBPYP standards and practices and this makes it confusing to those who are new to the program. However, as educators immerse themselves in the program, they are willing to adjust their pedagogical and philosophical views to not only learn more about the program, but to also practice the program with fidelity. Time is, therefore, of utmost importance for all involved. The challenge of time is noted in Pascoe's (2017) and Coppersmith's (2013) studies which were examined in Chapter 2.

The second challenge of resources was also an emerging theme. Participants felt there were too few resources at their disposal. The IBO website was one such resource that is accessible to IB educators, but the opinion of educators was that the information on the IBO's website is too varied, confusing, and hard to navigate. Much of the resources were either not applicable to concepts being taught or time once again did not allow teachers to make the necessary adjustments in adapting the resource.

Some of the participants explained that they had to purchase materials with their own money, create Go Fund Me accounts, Donors Choose accounts, seek materials

online through sites such as Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, and Facebook groups, or ask parents to donate needed resources. One participant noted that there are pre-prepared kits which are offered through the IBO. These kits contain pre made lessons and units. They are, however, very costly and the school is not in a financial position to purchase kits for each grade level.

Several researchers discussed in Chapter 2 also identified a lack of resources as a challenge to effective IB practice. These included Limitiaco (2015), Meadows (2016), and Pascoe (2017). They each cited that a lack of sufficient resources presented a barrier to educators' involvement in the IB program and this made the educators more wary of the program, and thus become a lot less invested.

The ability for educators to infuse the IB standards with the local and state standards proved challenging for educators. Cook (2015), Glass (2016), Jones (2015), Limitiaco (2015), and Meadows (2015) each examined the idea that it has proven to be a challenge for teachers to merge the IB program standards and the local state standards. According to the research, a few causes of this challenge may be the time factor; lack of sufficient time for teachers; confusion on how to integrate local state standards with IB as well as a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers who are new to the IB program.

Several study participants stated that the IBPYP was better suited to science and social studies because many of the social studies and science standards fit quite naturally with the IB units of inquiry. It is, however, more challenging with language arts and math since these tend to be more abstract when teaching students to be global citizens. It was however, mentioned by a few participants that reading was a great way to incorporate the

units of study, but not all areas of language arts would fit. They cited that special area subjects such as music and art were also easier to integrate than physical education.

Professional development and training were discussed together. This is because the teachers viewed them as the same entity. Sample participants viewed the issue of professional development as the launching pad necessary for educators of the IBPYP especially new teachers. They felt it was a necessity for new teachers to the program to receive training immediately in order to become better acclimated with the program. They believe that without professional development and continuous training, educators are unable to effectively, implement and utilize the IBPYP. Those who are new to the program emphasized the need for professional development and training in order to be effective in carrying out the mission and vision of not only the IB program, but also the school and school district. Each participant who cited the needed for professional development or ongoing training explained that they would be better equipped to incorporate the standards, understand how to better able fill out planners for the units, and also plan culminating activities for the end of each unit.

The findings examined above aligned with findings in research conducted by Cook (2015), Doerksen (2012), and Meadows (2017). They each discussed the issue of professional development and training with regard to the ability for continuous professional development and training to improve the educator's understanding of the program and their ability to effectively plan.

Teachers' ability to plan and collaborate with each other emerged as a challenge that teachers of the PYP are facing. Study participants are of the opinion that

collaboration is important in the PYP process, but they do not consistently get that opportunity. The idea of integrating state and local standards with the IB framework is a daunting task and teachers need time and the opportunity to collaborate with each other. Some participants felt that the planning time was “not sacred” and it is often be used as a data meeting, testing meeting, discussion of school improvement plans, or to discuss additional tasks that teachers needed to accomplish. The IB coordinator frequently has to attend to other school matters since she also serves as the testing coordinator and somewhat of an academic coach. The meeting would at times begin late, end early, or canceled. The educators felt that 45 or 30 minutes during the day does not suffice in planning units of inquiry.

The issue of the school being able to supply substitutes in order for effective planning to take place also came up. Because of the inadequate financial resources, it is difficult for the teachers to have consistent planning sessions; and it presents a challenge for the special area teachers to join the planning sessions because the school would have to find the money to finance the hiring of several substitutes in one day.

RQ 2: How do the challenges that teachers face affect their perception of the IBPYP program?

It was interesting to note that on the question of teachers’ perception of the IBPYP, there were more positive sentiments than negative. The teachers did not seem to tie in all of the challenges they faced with how they felt about the program. Challenges were something they saw as imminent in the teaching profession and there were ways around them.

The majority of the participants saw the program and its philosophy as something positive for schools to participate in especially because students were learning to embody the language of the IB attitudes and profile. One participant stated, “You become open-minded and culturally aware.” Another said, “I think it is valuable. I think it gives students an opportunity to learn how they want to learn.” Participant ET 13 stated, “I think it’s a really good program. It gets the kids involved. It teaches students how to become involved.”

Other participants were reluctant to say they loved the approach, but could not say they hated it either. They may reference the fact they liked the program or it is a good program. They would emphasize the fact that they loved the approach and the philosophy of the program, but did not like the demands it had on them as educators. Others enjoyed only certain aspects of the program such as the profile and attitudes, and the constructivist nature of the program, but did not enjoy trying to marry the local state standards with the IB units, fill out program planners, or keep up with consistently using the language of the program.

A few participants felt the program was not appropriate for their student demographic for different reasons. Cited reasons involved language barriers because the majority of the students are second language learners. One participant felt it was redundant for their student population because they already embody the IB profile and attitude due to their diverse backgrounds and as such, the program would be better suited for students who do not have diverse backgrounds and do not live in diverse neighborhoods. Others stated that they originally felt the program was elitist due to how

and where it got its start, but after spending a few years practicing the standards, they began to see some benefits, but not in all areas.

A few study participants are of the opinion that the challenges they face do have an impact on their perspective of the program. They presented some negative sentiments toward the program. A few participants felt that the program is just another methodology packaged differently. It is the same as inquiry-based or problem-based learning, but more expensive to maintain. Other teachers feel that a lack of consistency in professional development and training brings about a certain level of frustration and a few teachers each year lead a campaign aimed at getting rid of the program. One participant said, “Teachers would benefit from more training and not just kind of clutching at straws.” Cook (2015) supported a similar finding whereby only 40% of participants initially surveyed had a positive perspective of the IB program, but results of a second survey found that 60% of educators now had a favorable opinion of the program that they attributed to effective professional development and consistent training.

Some participants were of the opinion that the school should simply use parts of the program, but not try to use the whole program because of the challenges that arise from effective integration with the IB units. A few teachers felt that the school should do away with it entirely due to the financial impact it had on the school and the lack of resources.

RQ 3: Do the challenges that IB educators face impact their ability to effectively utilize the program and its standards?

The themes that emerged during the data collection phase amount to potential challenges that teachers who participate in the IBPYP face. These challenges also have the ability to affect teachers' instructional practice negatively. In the absence of a true roadmap or a prescriptive way of instructing and alignment guidance using the IB framework, many teachers struggle with effective practice. Teachers, therefore, have the task of developing genuine passion and building their own understanding of the program. Based on the feedback given by teachers, the challenges they face as IBPYP educators are impactful on their ability to utilize the IBPYP standards and practices effectively.

Insufficient time to plan IB units, challenges with standard integration, lack of resources, inconsistent training and minimal professional development all play a part in the educators' confidence and ability to develop and implement appropriate lessons for the IB units of inquiry. Many of the teachers felt the burden was theirs to find time to collaborate, align the IB units of study with state and local standards, allocate resources, gain input from special area teachers, complete IB planners and design culminating projects. Most of the educators felt they were up to the task, but the challenges are daunting to mission completion. Financial issues, insufficient training and knowledge of the program, no clear guidance, and insufficient IBPYP veterans tend to hinder teachers' ability to adequately plan and prepare instructional practices utilizing the IBPYP program.

Khairallah's (2015) discussed the impact that some of these challenges have on IB educators. Collaboration, content knowledge, curriculum alignment, and shared perspectives are a few of the elements that need to be in place for effective implementation and practice of the IB framework (Khairallah, 2015). Kairallah (2015) went on to explain that the need for consistent planning times, sufficient resources and training are necessary tools for effective IB practice.

Study participants explained that although training courses are accessible through the IB organization, much of the training takes place during the summer after the teachers have been utilizing the program for one full year. They cite that training prior to the start of the school year would be more beneficial for them and they would have some guidance on where to begin. A few noted that an IB school may be too confusing for new teachers and thus may not be a suitable environment for first year educators. Teaching can be stressful when you are a novice to the profession, but the added element of the IBPYP on top of the regular local state standards present another layer of stress for the novice teacher. It was therefore, recommended that new teachers should get their start in a regular public school before taking up employment in an IB school. On the other side of this advice is the fact that the majority of the teachers who participated in this study either did not know that the school was an IB school, thought they understood the concept of inquiry-based learning, or needed a job and did not give much thought to what an IB program entailed.

The fifth grade year for IBPYP students is a special one since this is the students' final year of the PYP. As such, an IBPYP exhibition takes place at the end of the fifth

grade year and involves almost two months of research and mentoring of exhibition groups. The fifth grade teachers and the IBPYP coordinator have to recruit mentors that include parents, teachers, or community volunteers. They spend at least six weeks guiding research and taking the students on field trips. The final piece is an action plan that students have to develop and implement. This action plan may range from collecting canned goods and clothes for donations to homeless shelters, starting a community garden, or buying phone cards for new immigrants. This process is a challenging one and requires many resources. The challenges always include time, resources, and finances. Teachers are daunted by this task and at times would like to scrap the process altogether.

Planning for these end-of-unit activities including the IBPYP exhibition requires time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and align curriculum standards for maximum effect. Payne (2017) note that in the absence of these elements, IB educators are at a disadvantage and find it difficult to carry out the necessary instructional plans. These barriers, thus, create lack luster emotions in teachers and teacher buy in to the program begins to wane (Payne, 2017). A few study participants indicated that with some of these challenges in place, they begin to doubt their abilities to practice the IB with fidelity; rethink their commitment to the program; revisit their original teaching and learning philosophies; and reassume their role as teacher and less of that of facilitator.

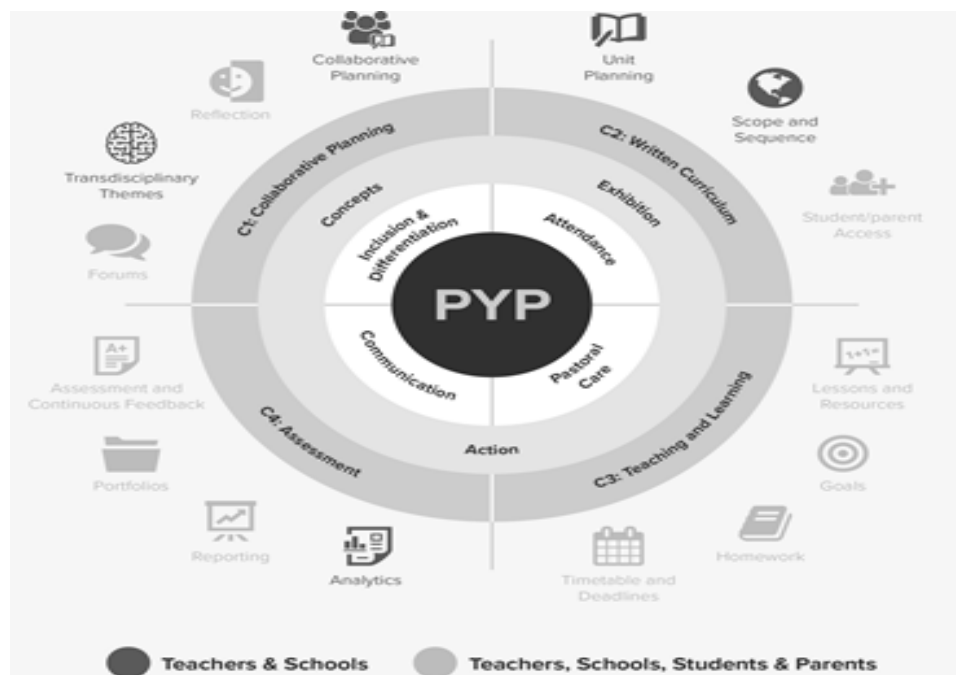


Figure 2: This figure shows that collaborative planning, time, and resources are embedded in the PYP. From IBO.org (2019).

Limitations of the Study

This study is qualitative in nature and focuses on the unique experiences of teachers who practice in an IBPYP authorized, public charter elementary school in the southeastern United States. Some of the findings may therefore not be generalizable. There are also additional limitations that may prevent this study from being generalizable. The study site is a public charter school with its own governing board that employs a lottery system for student admission. This makes it difficult to generalize the study results to a regular public school that is part of a school district with less autonomy. The study site also only focuses on the PYP framework. The study, therefore, does not include an examination of the Middle Years Program, (MYP), Diploma Program (DP), and Career Related Program (CP).

Another limitation of this study involves the sample size. The sample population comprised of only 18 teachers including an IBPYP coordinator. This sample size is by no means representative of the many and varied experiences of PYP educators in the United States. The sample size was also not as diverse as it could have been. There were only two male representatives in the sample. Therefore, sixteen of the participants were female.

As a novice researcher, I do not believe I designed questions that could have elicited much more varied responses from study participants. The responses seemed contained and limited to very specific issues and did not vary very much from one participant to another. Additional questions could have been regarding degree levels and licensure.

It is important to note that because I have a history with the case site, the IBPYP as a teacher and subsequently as an IBPYP coordinator, I may have come into this research with some preconceived ideas of what I was looking for or issues I was hoping participants would address. To some extent, I do believe the participants would have been more negative in their responses, but I was pleasantly surprised that the overall outlook on the program was positive.

The plan for this case study was originally for me to go on site to recruit study participants by introducing myself and explaining the nature of the study. However, after meeting with the principal and I was given the go ahead to send her the letters of cooperation along with several dates for her and her administrative team to choose from, she became unresponsive to my emails. I was therefore, forced to reach out to teachers

via their public school email in order to recruit participants. I also contacted several other schools with similar demographics as my case site as possible study sites, but to no avail.

These setbacks limited my ability to collect field notes and any other observations I would have made that would assist with supporting my findings. My study is limited to the interviews conducted with study participants without the analysis of documentation from other sources.

Recommendations

For practicing IBPYP educators to effect change, it is important that they receive continuous support and guidance on their educational journey. This qualitative research was conducted to discover the challenges teachers faced while utilizing the IBPYP program in addition to their perspective of the program. The research questions and the data collected were essential in collecting data that aligned with previous studies in addition a few surprising findings.

For IBPYP educators to be successful, they need access to resources, time to plan, training and professional development, guidance as it pertains to IB planners and standards integration. It is therefore, important for schools and district leadership to have a clear understanding of the program; what it entails; and the resources necessary for teachers to be successful. With this understanding, initial plans can be developed in order to help circumvent challenges and barriers to program implementation and utilization.

Training and professional development need to take place on the front end so that educators have a foundation or a starting point from which to begin their IB journey. In house professional development is valuable and on the job training, priceless. However,

teachers do need opportunities to network consistently with other IBPYP educators in different schools and school districts as well as learn new skills and strategies from the ‘IBPYP experts.’ Time for training and professional development to take place is also necessary and vital to the IBPYP teachers’ success. Additionally, time to plan and collaborate need to be incorporated on a continuous basis.

Any school that adopts the IBPYP program also needs to ensure prospective employees are fully aware of the IBPYP program and the requirements for working with the IBPYP framework as well as state and local curricula. Prospective employees should have the opportunity to make an informed decision before undertaking the role of IBPYP educator.

Implications

Additional research needs to take place in this area and it would be beneficial for future researchers to expand the scope and depth of this study. A larger sample would make a bigger impact in furthering the discussion and identifying strategies that would be helpful in supporting teachers with the challenges they face as they utilize the IBPYP framework. It would be interesting to understand other teachers’ challenges and perspectives for the IBPYP framework in public, charter, and private schools in various demographic and geographic areas in the United States.

It is important for schools and school districts that implement the IBPYP to utilize studies such as this one to inform how they implement and foster ongoing support for their teachers. Many teachers cited that financial resources are necessary for them to be effective; and it is therefore important that schools or districts considering adopting the

IBPYP ensure that they are in a financially stable place to provide the resources necessary for teachers.

Conclusion

One of the main reasons I decided to conduct this study was because I spent 10 years in a very diverse public charter school that became an authorized IBPYP school in 2008. It was a very interesting and eye opening time for me. As I utilized the program, I began to embody and utilize the IBPYP language and attitudes and I saw first-hand the difference it made to elementary students who went through the program. I also served as an IBPYP coordinator in this institution and when I started my doctoral journey, there was no doubt in my mind that I would study the IBPYP phenomena.

As I undertook this journey, I wanted to discover the perspectives teachers had of the IBPYP as well as the challenges they face as they utilized the program and whether or not these challenges helped to shape their perspective. It was important to me to try to make a difference by adding to the literature and adding another voice and, therefore, another perspective to existing studies.

My hope is to provide the leaders of schools and school districts who are trying to implement or utilize the IBPYP with additional research-based information so that they are better able to support their teachers along the IB journey. If school leaders have access to this information, they are able to empower themselves and will consequently be able to empower their teachers as well. Leaders will be equipped to put plans in place to account for adequate planning time, effective training and professional development, and the financial resources needed for teachers to be effective as they utilize the program.

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Appendix A: Interview Instrument

How long have you been an educator?

How long have you been involved with the IBPYP Curriculum?

Why did you decide to work in an IBPYP school?

What have your experiences been working with the IBPYP program?

What challenges do you face or did you face as you utilize/d the program?

Why do you believe these challenges exist or existed?

How do you believe you could overcome these challenges or how did you overcome these challenges?

What is your overall perception of the IB Program?

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Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Dear IBPYP Teacher,

My name is Olivia McDonald-Murray and I am a doctoral student at Walden University in the department of Education. I am in the data collection phase of my dissertation and I am conducting interviews as part of a qualitative research study to increase understanding of the challenges teachers face as they utilize the IB Primary Years Program (IBPYP) and how these challenges may shape the teacher's perception of the program.

As an IBPYP teacher, you are in an ideal position to provide valuable, first hand information from your own perspective. The audio recorded, telephone interview will take around 45 minutes to an hour. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts and perspectives on being a teacher of the IBPYP. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. There is no compensation for participating in this study and your participation is strictly voluntary. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and findings could lead to greater understanding of IBPYP and the supports or resources teachers may need.

If you are willing to participate please suggest a day and time that suits you and I'll do my best to be available. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask. I may be contacted at 555-555-1555.

A consent form is attached. If you are willing to participate, please fill out the consent form as well. Thank you for your time!

Yours in service,

Olivia McDonald-Murray

Exp. August 14, 2020

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