2021

Public Prekindergarten Teacher Perspectives on Professional Development in Literacy Pedagogy

Tunyia LaShawn Williams
Walden University

Walden University

College of Education

This is to certify that the doctoral study by

Tunyia L. Williams

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Patricia Anderson, Committee Chairperson, Education Faculty
Dr. Mary Lou Morton, Committee Member, Education Faculty
Dr. Steven Wells, University Reviewer, Education Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Public Prekindergarten Teacher Perspectives on Professional Development in Literacy Pedagogy

by

Tunyia L. Williams

MA, Walden University, 2014

BS, Victory University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

Low achievement in literacy for children entering kindergarten exists despite district-sponsored professional development (PD) in literacy pedagogy for prekindergarten teachers. PD has been shown to be important in improving teachers' instruction, so low achievement of children is unexplained. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored literacy PD in a school district in the Southeast United States. The conceptual framework was guided by Knowles's adult learning theory, which holds that adults are self-directed learners with many experiences upon which to draw. Research questions addressed teacher PD perspectives regarding inclusion of adult learning theory elements of planning, experiential learning, relevance, and problem-solving. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with twelve certified prekindergarten teachers (four each from three different campuses) who participated in prekindergarten literacy PD sessions for three or more years. Data were analyzed using inductive coding and thematic analysis. Key findings were that prekindergarten teachers do not have a voice in planning PD sessions, experience-based learning and problem-solving are absent in PD in literacy pedagogy instruction, and educators find PD sessions irrelevant to issues faced in classrooms pertaining to literacy instruction. This study contributes to positive social change by increasing understanding of teacher perspectives on effective PD and may lead to improved PD in literacy pedagogy provided to prekindergarten teachers. This may contribute to improved instruction and higher literacy achievement in young children.

Public Prekindergarten Teacher Perspectives on Professional Development in Literacy Pedagogy

by

Tunyia L. Williams

MA, Walden University, 2014

BS, Victory University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

August 2021

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my husband and three children who stood behind me throughout this entire journey.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Walden University faculty, my family members, and friends who helped me reach this point in my academic career. I would like to give a special thanks to my sisters, my closest personal friends, and Dr. Patricia Anderson for motivating me to push through the difficult times throughout this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Department of Education (DOE) in one state in the Southeast United States reported in 2017 that students in the state are far below their peers across the nation in reading proficiency. Some students have fallen below the set benchmarks as indicated by this same source. State DOE leaders have suggested this is partly due to an absence of high-quality statewide professional development (PD) in literacy instruction for educators. In the current study, I explored prekindergarten teacher perspectives on PD in literacy pedagogy. The conceptual framework for this study supported the importance of PD based on andragogy principles because adult learners typically learn best when knowledge and skills are applied and learned through facilitation (Knowles et al., 2005). Exploring teacher perspectives on literacy pedagogy may provide a greater understanding of how young students learn and may address the gap in practice evidenced by low achievement in reading. Results of this study may contribute to improvements in PD and teaching quality, leading to positive social change. Chapter 1 includes the problem, purpose, research questions, and nature of the study. I also provide definitions for key terms; identify the assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations; and describe the study's significance before transitioning to Chapter 2.

Background

A study by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2017) and continued researched conducted by the target state DOE found that early learners in prekindergarten through third grade in the target state scored significantly lower in reading skills than the national average, with only one third of students scoring at or

above 80% on reading comprehension. State DOE leaders suggested in internal reports that educators need access to high-quality PD with instruction and resources in literacy pedagogy to align professional learning with new literacy standards for early learners in the state. According to Epp (2017), efforts to provide educators with meaningful experiences have fallen short, and many teachers report that the PD provided does little to support instructional practices in their classrooms to benefit young learners. Even seasoned teachers may not know how to implement literacy instruction and may think what they are doing is adequate because of their number of years teaching in the classroom (Mitton-Kükner & Murray Orr, 2018). Mitton-Kükner and Murray Orr (2018) found that many teachers feel they are not responsible for or have the knowledge needed to integrate literacy into instruction at the beginning of their careers, indicating a gap in practice regarding PD offered in literacy pedagogy.

Current research indicated focused PD in literacy pedagogy is one way to ensure the implementation of effective literacy instructional strategies in classrooms (Mitton-Kükner & Murray Orr, 2018). Christianakis (2018) suggested that to effectively embed PD methods in instruction and sustain literacy and instructional practices that increase student growth, teachers must understand how to introduce new skills and instruction. Kosnik et al. (2017) reported that teachers must have quality PD to develop their understanding of effective literacy pedagogy. Understanding pedagogy, making sense of training opportunities, and evaluating the benefits of specific strategies represent teaching advances obtained through ongoing PD opportunities (Zide & Mokhele, 2018). PD that

follows adult learning principles reflects the context of learners' daily work and their current needs (Knowles et al., 2005).

PD for teachers refers to ongoing learning that improves or enhances educators' professional knowledge while increasing their competence, enhancing their practices, and advancing students academically (Mohan et al., 2017). The target state DOE and Van Waes et al. (2016) conducted studies that investigated educator PD and found that policymakers and education leaders need more data on professional learning based on teachers' reported experiences. The target state DOE also suggested, in efforts to help teachers move students from "reliable" to "highly regarded," more quality PD in literacy is needed. Additional PD is needed to assist educators in selecting instruction with the complexity that allows students to think critically, discern the relevance of text, and demonstrate conceptual knowledge on state assessments geared toward measuring fluency and reading, such as those taken in kindergarten through third grades, according to the state internal report. In a survey conducted by DOE investigating the relevance of PD for educators in the target state, 50% of teachers who attended PD sessions chosen by administrators found the PD to be ineffective. Forty-four percent of teachers who participated in school-wide PD opportunities provided by school leaders found sessions to be meaningless in the classroom. Eighty-three percent of educators reported that the most helpful PD they attended were sessions they chose for themselves. However, the same study conducted by the target state DOE also found two thirds of educators, from nearly 40,000 participants in the study, believed the professional learning opportunities provided were adequate regarding early reading knowledge and pedagogy related to

curriculum implementation in prekindergarten classrooms. The disparities evident in this internal study, including (a) dissatisfaction with the required PD compared to personally selected PD and (b) satisfaction with PD related to early literacy despite the low achievement outcomes in literacy for children, suggest that more information is needed to improve PD in the target state. High-quality PD opportunities are needed for educators to enhance their knowledge, pedagogy, and teaching skills while providing students with developmentally appropriate literacy instruction (Epp, 2017; Mohan et al., 2017).

The purpose of PD, regardless of the PD style, is to increase and develop teacher skills and knowledge in pedagogy and efficaciously evaluate students academically (Mohan et al., 2017). There is a gap in practice related to effective PD in literacy pedagogy for prekindergarten teachers to help their young learners achieve academic goals. According to K. Patton and Parker (2017), PD for teachers must have a purpose and be meaningful to support students' academic advancement and growth in competencies while gaining knowledge in pedagogy. Baker (2018) suggested that educators should be responsible for pedagogical strategies designed with an enabled, nuanced understanding of teaching contexts such as those gained in PD sessions to meet the needs of young learners. The current study was needed to address patterns in the current situation of inconsistency in the ways different sessions of PD are offered to prekindergarten educators. This study has the potential to inform individuals in the education field and beyond regarding PD with emphasis on efforts to improve intentional teaching practices.

Problem Statement

Low achievement in reading literacy for children entering kindergarten exists despite district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy for prekindergarten teachers. Students in prekindergarten through third grade in one Southeast state in the United States are far below their peers across the nation in literacy achievement according to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2017). Evidence from within the district showed a lack of high-quality PD, especially in literacy development for prekindergarten teachers. According to an internal study by the state DOE released in 2017, this problem in part is due to the absence of high-quality statewide PD in literacy instruction for educators. Snell et al. (2015) stated that early vocabulary and language development are foundational for kindergarten literacy, but prekindergarten instruction may not sufficiently build these foundations to support reading achievement in kindergarten. Snell et al. found that vocabulary instruction for prekindergartners and kindergarteners is cursory, and educators may not know how to implement or integrate strategies to expand student learning.

Several researchers noted a gap in practice related to effective PD. For example, Hindman and Wasik (2017) suggested further studies should examine interventions such as PD in language and literacy instruction for prekindergarten educators and the benefits of showing teachers how to implement best practices for children at risk. Markussen-Brown et al. (2017) suggested an investigation into developing better strategies to assess the way prekindergarten teachers acquire PD and how better strategies affect children's emergent literacy outcomes. Rezzonico et al. (2015) suggested an investigation into how

PD is delivered and how it affects prekindergarten educator learning and how coaching could add value to professional learning. Although prekindergarten classrooms are designed so that students have opportunities to explore different interest learning centers, teacher ongoing professional learning is considered moderate related to pedagogical content knowledge, according to Lynch (2017). Lynch additionally suggested further long-term investigation into how engaging in adequate PD with a focus on sharing the knowledge behind practice and the why to what educators are learning could influence teaching strategies during instruction.

Eadie et al. (2019) reported that to increase teacher quality and effectiveness, there must be a focus on PD and learning. The authors also suggested that PD should target areas that address teacher-scaffolded learning, content knowledge, and practice strategies that support how children learn, such as instructional support within educator–child interactions. To address the problem of low literacy achievement among kindergarten students, I explored prekindergarten teacher perspectives on PD in literacy pedagogy offered by school leaders. This study was needed to address the problem of inadequate prekindergarten student reading achievement by understanding prekindergarten teachers' perceptions of PD in literacy pedagogy. Prekindergarten children developed literacy skills as a result of their teacher gaining relevant PD that deepened their theoretical knowledge while improving practical skills (Machynska et al., 2020).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy. Because students in the target state score below other students across the United States in literacy achievement, and because administrators have pointed to ineffective PD as a possible cause of this problem, I examined teacher perspectives of the suitability of district PD in the areas of literacy pedagogy. This basic qualitative study using interviews was guided by Knowles's (1984) principles of andragogy or adult learning theory to draw upon the insights of prekindergarten teachers who had participated in PD provided by school district leaders and administrators.

Research Questions

Three research questions (RQs) guided this study:

RQ1: How do prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ2: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem-solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ3: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

These questions were derived from adult learning theory, which I describe in the next section.

Conceptual Framework

Adult learning theory, based on Knowles's (1984) ideas, was used to ground the current study of prekindergarten teacher perspectives on effective PD in literacy pedagogy. Knowles coined the term *andragogy* to mean the art and science of adult learning. Instruction that incorporates andragogy addresses what adults need to know, supports their self-concept, acknowledges their prior experience, and is responsive to participants' readiness to learn, orientation to learning, and intrinsic motivation to learn. Knowles suggested four principles for consideration when engaging adults in learning experiences such as PD: (a) adults are included in both planning and evaluating instruction, (b) instructors use an experiential approach as the basis for learning activities, (c) instruction provides learning that is immediately relevant to the adult, and (d) instruction is centered on learning from authentic problems instead of from predetermined content.

Adult learning theory aligned with the problem and purpose of the current study and guided the RQs and methodology related to how adults learn. According to Knowles (1984), PD should support teacher self-concepts and be relevant to their life experiences to be successful in expanding their knowledge and practice. When PD is relevant to adults as educators, they can readily apply learned concepts and will be more likely to sustain information related to literacy pedagogy (Ende, 2016). In the current study, these principles guided data gathered from interviews with prekindergarten educators related to training, training materials offered, and whether training was relevant in building knowledge and skill in pedagogy. In this study, teachers offered their perspectives on PD

received in literacy pedagogy as part of an effort to understand the problem of low student achievement. Teacher perspectives on effective PD in literacy pedagogy were grounded in andragogy because they related to educators seeking to discover a new method for acquiring knowledge (see Knowles et al., 2005). Brunsek et al. (2020) conducted a study related to PD and early childhood educators and suggested further research to examine ongoing research on PD content, amount, and type offered in efforts to ensure optimal implementation and quality instruction for students in prekindergarten classrooms. Brunsek et al. also found that PD can offer educators the ability to tap into different content areas that can have the likelihood to improve child outcomes.

Andragogy also allows educators to have a more profound scope toward learning while going through the process of becoming aware of significant experience through learning how to self-evaluate and take control of what they learn (Knowles et al., 2005). Piasta et al. (2020) studied prekindergarten educators being offered state-sponsored PD and found a need for more effective PD convergence that addresses several key principles including intensive and ongoing content-focused learning opportunities. Piasta et al. also suggested a study of PD content that focuses on the many demands that educators face in their daily instruction. Chang et al. (2017) similarly indicated that failure of PD for educators to result in improved outcomes for students is evidence of PD's ineffectiveness, and this failure may be due to lack of attention to principles of adult learning theory. I present a detailed explanation of the conceptual framework for this study in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

This study was a basic qualitative study using interviews because conducting in-depth, open-ended interviews was the best approach to address the research problem and purpose (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). In-depth, open-ended interviews provided insight while aligning with the RQs of this study, which allowed me to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives on PD in literacy pedagogy. Interviews allow for gathering information and facts through stories of experiences that cannot easily be observed and are based on participant narratives and their own versions of reality (Taylor et al., 2016). Qualitative inquiry focuses on aspects such as feelings and emotions and does not assume there is one view or truth, but several perspectives related to the experience (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In gaining an understanding of participants' personal perspectives, I collected data that were largely dependent on me as the researcher and my ability to be an active listener (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). According to Taylor et al. (2016), interviews allow researchers to engage in providing active attention rather than passive listening to carefully document while asking probing questions to construct a picture through the participants' perspectives on events and experiences while gathering information that is relevant to the RQs and study.

Constructivism relates to a basic qualitative study because the theoretical frameworks and interpretive communication inform specific procedures of research, such as interaction and experiences between individuals (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The epistemology of constructivism places a focus on how a person learns or makes meaning of previous experiences, then adds to this knowledge via social interactions to construct a

new understanding of what is perceived (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Guided by the beliefs of social constructivism, adult learners build upon the premise of gaining an understanding of their experiences from life and work (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the current study, this social constructivist method allowed each participant to describe their perspectives of their experiences through stories and allowed me to rely on each participant for data (see Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used inductive methods to address the gap in practice regarding teacher perspectives of PD in literacy pedagogy and understand their ideas about the phenomenon of low reading test scores in the target district.

The open-ended interview approach allowed me to interview 12 public prekindergarten teachers from three campuses (four teachers from each campus) who had participated in literacy PD sessions for 3 years or more. Malterud et al. (2016) stated that new knowledge, even if provided by a small sample, can provide insight specific to the study based on experiences and knowledge of the participants. According to M. Q. Patton (2015), the sample size has no rules related to the right or wrong number. The sample size will depend on what the researcher is seeking to understand, the purpose of the study, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and the amount of data acquired with the time and resources for this particular sample size (M. Q. Patton, 2015). In-depth, open-ended interview questions are appropriate to obtain insight into the perspective of the person telling the story and to make sure data and theory fit (Taylor et al., 2016). Additionally, in-depth open-ended interviews are appropriate because they allow

participants to communicate their experiences from their own perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

In the current study, I conducted telephone interviews to explore prekindergarten teacher perspectives on PD in literacy pedagogy, using a narrative analysis approach. The narrative analysis method allowed me to make sense of participants' perspectives, analyze their insights and meanings, and compare and contrast those perspectives to identify essential insights throughout this analysis (see Willig & Rogers, 2017). The interviews allowed the participants to share their experiences and insights, make a point, and claim their identity through personal references (see Willig & Rogers, 2017). I audio recorded and transcribed the telephone interviews, which allowed me to capture important aspects of the interview without vital data being lost (see Taylor et al., 2016). Transcribing was vital to the data collection process because it produced accurate data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) suggested a researcher should transcribe their data to secure many details relevant to the analysis and allow the social and emotional aspects relating to the interview to be recalled during this process. I completed each transcription within 48 hours of the interview. I analyzed interview data using descriptive coding (see Saldaña, 2016).

Definitions

Andragogy: The art and science of how adults learn, also known as adult learning theory (Knowles et al., 2015).

Effective sustainable professional development: Activities designed to improve educators' instructional practices by combining prior and new knowledge and techniques

with the goal of advancing students' learning outcomes (Mangope & Mukhopadhyay, 2015).

Literacy content: A blend of beliefs, morals, abilities, and modes used to comprehend, communicate, and critically think after reading and writing while developing knowledge on how to respond to the complexity of the social world (Mitton-Kükner & Murray Orr, 2018).

Preservice training: Per the target state Department of Education, preservice training is training all district teachers participate in before the beginning of each school year to enhance competencies regardless of years of service.

Professional development: An approach used to provide ongoing learning for advancing practice for educators on content knowledge using different approaches to instruction or classroom management regarding classroom practices (Snyder et al., 2018).

Professional learning: The growth that educators experience as they learn through different changes in practice and provide evidence of a change in student achievement, otherwise referred to as development and change in professional development strategies (Boylan & Demack, 2018).

Assumptions

I assumed that the participating prekindergarten teachers would be sufficiently knowledgeable of literacy pedagogy to comment on the effectiveness of literacy PD they receive. I also assumed that prekindergarten teachers had perspectives on this subject and would be truthful and comprehensive in describing their perspectives and experiences of district-sponsored PD. These assumptions were necessary because they were inherent in

an interview-based study, which relied on the responses of informants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study included the perspectives of prekindergarten educators in one school district in the Southeast United States. This study included 12 public prekindergarten teachers from three campuses in a single school district. Excluded from this study were teachers of other grade levels and teachers from other districts or states. I also excluded persons who I had monitored in the past or were part of my current caseload. This study focused on a small group of teachers who were invited to participate because they work with prekindergarten students. Although the goal of this qualitative study was not to generalize the findings, there is potential for transferability to other contexts to provide insight into the effectiveness of PD in literacy pedagogy from the perspective of teachers who must implement this PD in their classrooms.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was its small sample size of 12 participants, which was necessary to permit in-depth interviews that would provide rich data. A source of bias may have been that data and data analysis could have been filtered through my mind and reflected my experiences and perspectives. Such limitations are common in interview-based studies in which results are dependent on the truthfulness and objectivity of informants and the researcher (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). It was my responsibility to ensure the integrity of this study was maintained by using a journal to make notes, describe anecdotes, and record any beliefs, values, strengths, or weaknesses I noticed in

myself before and after the interviews (see Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). I used an audio recorder to record the interviews to ensure all data were captured accurately. I also kept a reflective journal, as recommended by Ravitch and Carl (2016), as a way of monitoring and managing my biases.

Significance

Reddy et al. (2017) pointed out ways school leaders and administrators can enhance teacher effectiveness while supporting professional growth. Reddy et al. suggested that current PD is ineffective given the lack of evidence-based instruction and sound teaching practices that follow most PD experiences. The current study may support professional learning and practice by identifying public prekindergarten teacher perspectives on district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy.

This study may contribute to positive social change by generating understanding of public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy. State reading achievement data indicated that there is a need for improving literacy outcomes for children, but Scarparolo and Hammond (2018) found that PD generally does not provide what educators believe is relevant to classroom issues and does not offer new content knowledge or usable teaching strategies. The current study may contribute to improving the literacy levels of young learners and prepare prekindergarten children for success as they enter kindergarten and beyond by increasing understanding of prekindergarten teacher perspectives of PD in literacy pedagogy.

Summary

The conceptual framework based on Knowles's (1984) adult learning theory guided this basic qualitative study with interviews. I sought to explore and provide understanding of public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy by using the principles of adult learning theory. Findings from this study may provide an understanding of why PD currently offered has not had the desired effect of increasing children's achievement in literacy. Implications for positive social change include greater attention to principles of adult learning in district-sponsored PD, which may lead to increased teaching effectiveness and better educational experiences for children. According to strategies guided by Knowles (1984), adult learning theory could assist in the decision-making process with planning PD. In Chapter 2, I expand upon the foundational framework of Knowles and other researchers who have used principles of andragogy to guide their studies. I provide information on the literature search strategy, conceptual framework, literature related to key variables and concepts, and a summary of the review. Moreover, I review literature from researchers who contributed to the existing knowledge related to teacher perspectives of PD on literacy pedagogy. I aimed to address the gap in the literature on understanding the perspectives of educators on strategies regarding PD. The outcome of this study may result in positive social change in the way school leaders and districts plan PD for educators.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem that was the focus of this study was low achievement in literacy for prekindergarten children entering kindergarten despite district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy for prekindergarten teachers. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives on district-sponsored PD offered in literacy pedagogy. Levy (2016) stated that even though every child needs to acquire basic literacy skills, instruction is uneven because educators are not required to teach these skills the same way they are required to present math and science skills. Bates and Morgan (2018) suggested that teachers of young children lack knowledge because PD opportunities do not provide opportunities that link theory to practice. Hamre et al. (2017) found that PD in different school sectors, such as Head Start and public preschools, was limited and did not support teachers in a way that allowed educators to sufficiently support students. In Chapter 2, I provide a synthesis of research related to andragogy and professional development, explain the relevance of the research, and describe different approaches to literacy pedagogy. The principles of Knowles's andragogy theory guided this study.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted searches for relevant sources related to my topic using the following Walden University databases: Academic Search Complete, AERA Open, Education Source, ERIC, EBSCO ebooks, Dissertations and Theses, Dissertations and Theses at Walden University, Open Library, ProQuest Central, ProQuest EBook Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycEXTRA, Psychology: A SAGE full text collection, PsycINFO,

SAGE Premier, SocINDEX with full text, Thoreau, Taylor and Francis Online, and Google Scholar. The keywords that I used for this study were *adult learning theory*, *andragogy*, *early childhood professional development*, *Head Start professional development for teachers*, *literacy*, *literacy pedagogy*, *ongoing professional learning*, *professional development*, *professional development for teachers in education*, *reading*, *teacher instruction*, and *teacher development*. In my iterative search, I used Google Scholar to apply new search terms gained from prior resources on teacher PD in prekindergarten education and andragogy, and I also applied terms and ideas from articles to find new search terms. I focused on studies that were published within the last 5 years in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, but I also included older seminal works that pertained to andragogy. Some sources were also acquired using textbooks on teacher professional development.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was based on Knowles's (1984) adult learning theory and his notion of andragogy. Andragogy addresses adults' readiness to learn, self-concept, orientation to learning, and intrinsic motivation also referred to as need to learn (Knowles, 1973). Knowles (1973) proposed four basic principles of andragogy, including readiness to learn, which is supported when adults are included in both planning and evaluating instruction. Learners' experience, the second principle, is supported when instructors use an experiential approach as the premise for learning activities (Knowles, 1973). The need to know is the third principle, which is supported when instructional content is immediately relevant to the adult learner (Knowles, 1973).

The fourth principle addresses learners' perspectives toward learning, which are supported by instruction based on solving authentic problems instead of absorbing instructor-delivered information (Knowles, 1973). I explored each of these four principles.

Knowles's Principles of Andragogy

The principles of andragogy are based on the premise that adult learning involves mental inquiry and is not receptive to transmitted information (Knowles et al., 2005). As described by Knowles (1980), implementation of adult education comprises three steps, including assessment of prior knowledge, the acquisition of new knowledge, and understanding of personal skills, values, interests, and attitudes. Additionally, a learning experience must provide learners with opportunities for self-development with peers and colleagues, and opportunities to meet a goal, improve a current situation, or advance personal enrichment and satisfaction (Knowles, 1980). Knowles (2005) assumed that once a learner matures, they develop a readiness to learn and an openness toward change, an appreciation for the educative value of experiences, a need to know and a predisposition toward self-directed learning, and lastly a growing motivation to learn and solve problems as the learner becomes older and more seasoned. Each of the assumptions contributes to the notion, central to andragogy, that adults prefer an active role in their learning.

Readiness to Learn

The principle of readiness to learn is based on the learner's need to learn based on specific experiences that may arise in life. Knowles (1978) noted that children are born

ready to learn whatever is presented to them in the process of pedagogy. Adults, in contrast, are motivated to learn only when the learner is ready to acquire new knowledge (Knowles, 1978). Motivating experiences are situational and depend on a perceived lack of knowledge or skill that requires the adult to want or need to learn in order to resolve this lack. Knowles (2005) stated there are two dimensions to adult learning positions, directional and supported, which may vary by learner characteristics or situationally. Directional learners require more help from others, and more competent adults have the need to seek direction in the early stages of the learning process (Knowles, 2005). Other learners who require support may not need direction but instead may need encouragement from others (Knowles, 2005). A successful adult learner has the ability to recognize their need for either direction or support at the beginning of a learning experience and as they gain more understanding. They must pay attention to their needs and identify whether and when they require direction or support during learning experiences (Knowles, 2005).

A trainer's attention to participants' readiness to learn allows adults to accept and share responsibility for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning experiences while committing to jointly collaborate (Knowles, 2005). When adults are included in the planning and evaluation of instruction, they feel a sense of self-worth and feel mutually respected because they are included in the process of formulating their learning (Knowles, 2005). Brockett and Hiemstra (2019) argued that adults who engage in self-directed learning reap greater benefits than through other forms of learning because a self-directed approach forces the learner to take control and achieve maximum learning.

Role of Experience

One of the critical elements that helps shape learning is the background of the person and their personal experiences (Knowles, 2005). As individuals grow and develop, they accumulate a wealth of experience that provides rich and excellent resources for learning (Knowles, 1980). The adult learner is able to attach meaning to what is being learned (Knowles, 1980). At the same time, adults must learn and identify their experience-based triggers and biases so they may unlock or change existing views and beliefs related to learning new material and refamiliarizing with prior knowledge (Knowles, 2005).

Experienced-based learning is important in training for adults because adults gather information through unique experiences and external sources throughout life in ways that mold their self-identity (Knowles, 1973). One of the main jobs of the brain it to help people survive in their environment, and adults are exposed to prior learning from different experiences with the questions of does it make sense and does it provide meaning (Knowles et al., 2015). The brain is exposed to prior learning from different experiences and look for ways to connect and evaluate that new learning from prior or existing neural networks that are formed from preliminary experiences (Knowles et al., 2015). Research in the field of cognitive neuroscience demonstrated that processes of autobiographical retrieval and the ability to retain, recall, and evaluate experiences are essential to learning (Hagen & Park, 2016). These neurological processes confirm the value of experience and the use of experiential approaches for learning that are central to andragogy. Andragogy reflects the premise that individuals learn on different levels and

must be able to associate learning events with prior experience and personal needs (Knowles et al., 2015).

Need to Know

The principle of need to know refers to adults' need to understand the relevance of instruction to their problems in their contexts. Adults must understand the value of their learning before they can take responsibility to learn because value provides internal motivation and creates an orientation to learn (Knowles et al., 2015). When adults cope with tasks or problems, they are inspired to remedy this difficult situation, so the relevance of training to real life challenges is a key principle of adult learning (Brocket & Hiemstra, 2019).

According to Knowles (2005), the goal of adult instruction is to help learners become self-teaching by encouraging them to take control of the facilitation and mastery of their learning. This suggests that a learner must feel personal autonomy and take ownership of their goals and purpose regarding their need to know what is being learned (Knowles, 2005). Knowles (2005) stated that even a person who chooses traditional ways of learning over self-directed learning has taken ownership of the matter because they have recognized the learning strategy that would work best for them in their situation. The goal of self-directed learning is to increase autonomy making sure not to put limits or impose purposes and goals on the desired learning events (Knowles, 2005). Self-directed learning is more closely related to what is expected of adult learners because the model mimics real-life learning settings and relies on learners' need to know (Knowles, 2005).

Orientation to Learning

Orientation to learning is achieved for adults when instruction is problem centered rather than content oriented; learning must derive from and be readily applied to current issues in adults' experiences. That is, orientation to learning refers to instruction that deals with practical problems while improving abilities and competency in more conceptual ways (Hagen & Park, 2016). Learning of this type allows adults to gain subject-matter content and organize the content logically, but also permits immediate application of this content and experimentation with new solutions in application to existing problems (Knowles et al., 2015).

A learner is oriented to learn when they can use prior knowledge to link current experiences to inspire new learning, thereby forming a need to learn and providing an immediate application of what is learned to a personally significant issue (Knowles, 2005). This principle of learning allows the adult learner to implement what is learned yesterday into today's experiences with a perspective of immediate application (Knowles, 1978). Orientation to learning and problem-solving provides the benefit of having the desired knowledge increase performance through training experiences (Knowles, 2005). These four principles, according to Knowles (1973), form the basis of the science of teaching adults, which he termed andragogy.

Andragogy and the Teaching of Adults

The techniques applied for teaching adults involve strategies that are different from techniques used in teaching children; teaching adults involves the analysis of different experiences instead of the study of subjects (Knowles et al., 2005). According to

Knowles et al. (2005), teaching children involves creation of learning experiences as discrete units of cognition; however, teaching adults involves creation of experiences that transform the perspective of the learner from what it was to something new. Techniques used in teaching children give educators full responsibility for content and methods, while effective teaching of adults requires that learners take responsibility for making their own decisions about learning (Knowles et al., 2005). Adult learners engaged in life-centered issues approach learning with a readiness to learn because they believe instruction will be of immediate benefit when applied to their lives (Knowles et al., 2005). Learning involves a need or desire to change habits, attitudes, and knowledge while making social and personal adjustments to enhance intellectual growth (Knowles et al., 2005).

Knowles (2005) contended that all domains of adult learning could benefit from this experiential learning approach. Nasser et al. (2015) suggested that adults believe they do not have a supporting role in their professional growth and would like to assist in the planning of ongoing opportunities to learn. According to Seyoum and Basha (2017), the training and learning process for adults should involve learners being active in the learning process while enhancing self-awareness. Seyoum and Basha stated that training for adults should give learners the ability to make use of their experiences so they can resolve issues by using different learning techniques. Changes in PD for educators could include principles of readiness to learn, experience-based learning, relevant content to address a need to know, and problem-based learning (Knowles et al., 2015). Chang et al. (2017) argued that PD for educators is ineffective because it fails to change teaching

practices or show improvements in student learning. Chang et al. suggested the ineffectiveness of PD for educators is caused by inattention to principles of andragogy. For these reasons, Knowles's theory of adult learning and andragogy informed my study of prekindergarten teacher perspectives on the PD they are offered relating to literacy pedagogy. The research questions that guided this study reflected Knowles's four principles. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I describe current literature in areas of andragogy's approaches to PD, availability of PD to educators, teachers use of PD and other professional learning, professional coaching as PD, pedagogical improvements resulting from PD, and PD in prekindergarten literacy pedagogy.

Andragogical Practices in Education

Experiential learning as explained by Knowles was used by Naliaka-Mukhale and Hong (2017) as they sought to explore the PD needs, delivery methods, and changes required for educators to increase academic growth for students. Findings included embracing a seminar way of teaching, using practical learning approaches, and offering courses relevant to teachers. Khalil and Elkhider (2016) suggested different modalities of ongoing learning could potentially offer educators an individualized style of learning that is acceptable to their learning needs, such as those in adult learning theory, also known as andragogy. Andragogy has become a guiding principle of adult instruction.

Andragogy in practice can be applied and combined with other teaching techniques of active learning to support adult learning during PD. Pavlova and Sanger (2016) sought to examine andragogy and other combined techniques of active learning and found active learning could stimulate thinking, promote interactivity, and foster

motivation and emotional perspectives of the learning process. Seyoum and Basha (2017) revealed adult learners require considerable amounts of support such as that provided through andragogy and active learning because environments based in andragogy are conducive to the transfer of knowledge and are centered around real-life experiences. Also, Carpenter and Linton (2016), writing about PD, confirmed that adults should be involved in the learning process, be able to relate to training experiences, have resources available for new learning, and apply PD to real-life problems. Likewise, the practices outlined in each study assist and support adult learners through practices of andragogy.

Helping adults learn through the study of pedagogical practices, such as those used in andragogy, allows educators to move from reliance on teacher-directed instruction to self-directed learning, and to gain through personal experience the ability to move from subject-focused to problem-focused learning while utilizing any style of teaching method to promote students' academic growth (Namaziandost et al., 2018). Knowles's (1984) theory is designed to guide learners to be independent, which allows for self-directed and autonomous learning. Novitasari and Sugito (2018) suggested that training using the theory of andragogy allows educators to provide students with a higher quality of education because it enhances their teaching strategies and allows individuals to take initiative, diagnose their needs, formulate learning goals, identify material resources for learning, choose learning strategies, and evaluate outcomes learned with the ability to rediagnose areas of concern. Sato et al. (2017) placed focus on Knowles's andragogy and a need for diverse educational strategies to promote ongoing professional learning that is flexible and relevant. Charungkaittikul and Henschke (2018) found

through the practical application of andragogy that learning strategies could be modified to fulfill the needs and uniqueness of adult learners and to focus on the process of learning and not just the content. Thus, each study provided evidence and models based on the six assumptions presented which Knowles believes are key to adult learners and foundation for learning as explained throughout this research.

Adult learning theory has been used in a variety of learning environments. Kamisli and Ozonur (2017) explored the effect of first aid training based on key learning principles of adult learning theory for assisting adults in acquiring knowledge. The authors found planning based in adult learning theory principles increased student success when adult learning needs were considered, and participants were able to share their experiences (Kamisli & Ozonur, 2017). Culkin (2018) sought to understand how the principles of andragogy assist adult learners in professional learning in a nonformal military setting. The findings suggested benefits with the social aspects of learning, with allowing adults to be active agents in their learning to meet professional demands, and with application of new knowledge to real-life situations (Culkin, 2018). Beard (2017) looked at connections between principles of spiritual formation and adult learning theory and found a strong relationship existed between andragogy and adult learner spiritual development. According to Blackley and Sheffield (2015), the principles of andragogy can be applied across all domains of learning to include formal and informal learning, while applying critical thinking skills and content application to real-life situations and experiences Feltsan (2017) suggested when educating adults there must be an atmosphere in which the learners articulate a need to learn, the content matches the demands of the

educators to the level that is understandable to adult learners, and the PD administered through this process aid them in integrating new knowledge into their everyday practice. Furthermore, Knowles' principles allow teachers to take responsibility of their professional learning and have shown relevance when considering how adults learn when the theory of andragogy is applied to ongoing learning opportunities.

The work conducted by Knowles's (1984) adult learning theory of andragogy grounded this study by providing brief descriptions of how adults learn through the art and science of teaching and pedagogy. The theory outlines how adults draw from their own experiences, move from being dependent to independent self-sufficient learners that are goal oriented with a willingness to apply new knowledge with a motivation to learn. The guiding questions of this research were formulated based on Knowles's adult learning theory and informed by the framework of this study. I addressed the PD that was currently available to educators, and the ways early childhood educators use PD and other forms of professional learning. Finally, I addressed PD among prekindergarten teachers specifically, and PD in literacy pedagogy.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

In this review of the literature related to key variables and concepts I presented research related to PD availability and methods, practices offered, and use of PD by prekindergarten educators. Additionally, I presented research regarding PD specific to prekindergarten contexts and PD in literacy pedagogy.

Availability of PD to Educators

Although PD has been an important component to teacher development, there appears to be "a lack of respect" when it comes to how prekindergarten PD is delivered (Baker, 2018, p. 231). Baker (2018) found a lack of frequency in PD, lack of fidelity to teacher-centered instruction, and lack of active participation by prekindergarten educators in their learning. Gomez et al. (2015) stated that although PD is offered to educators in different modalities, such as workshop-based instruction, communities of practice, individualized or onsite-PD sessions, and coaching, PD opportunities for prekindergarten teachers are often insufficient preparation for educating young children. Often workshop-based instruction or onsite-PD sessions are the only forms of ongoing learning teachers receive. Despite being required, PD for prekindergarten educators is inadequate and under-supported, and methods are not enough preparation for educating young children. (Gomez et al., 2015). According to Hindman and Wasik (2017), there is a gap in practice in bridging research and practice in prekindergarten classrooms. This gap is due in part to a lack of quality instructional experiences relating to PD being provided to teachers resulting in inadequately trained professionals in the education field (Hindman & Wasik, 2017). Additionally, with this gap in practice, Hindman and Wasik (2017) stated essential skills are linked to getting ongoing learning associated with PD in research, practice, and the district curriculum to enhance teacher knowledge.

The primary goals of PD, according to Luft et al. (2016), is to increase knowledge that is beneficial to both teacher and student, align with the school culture and district curriculum, provide teachers opportunities to work collaboratively with others, and allow

educators to grow professionally and increase their knowledge. Linder et al. (2016), in a study of over 1,000 early childhood teachers, found limited support by school leaders and administrators and miscommunication regarding PD sessions and implementation of methods. Rivalland et al. (2019) looked at early childhood educators' professional opportunities and found PD provided to teachers in the form of in-service opportunities available all could be ineffective because learners have varying levels of expertise which may not be supported by undifferentiated PD. Margolis et al. (2017) suggested teachers are often provided PD in the form of workshops and off-campus conferences by school leaders and administrators, but these strategies may not yield changes in instruction because isolated learning does not offer the immediate feedback and ongoing support that could lead to meaningful changes for educators. Consequently, the strategies may not yield results due to an absence of 'higher levels' of teacher PD to assist with the varying professional levels of teachers according to Margolis et al. (2017).

PD needs vary from teacher to teacher due to their different levels of expertise and support needed. Jacobs et al. (2015) suggested educators of all teaching levels want an increased focus on PD that provides various levels of support and balances classroom expectations. Weber-Mayrer et al. (2015), in a study of school-based prekindergarten learning opportunities that included prekindergarten teachers' backgrounds, qualifications, and the PD being offered, found the systems implemented for monitoring educators' PD were plagued by several issues such as no one reviewing, keeping track, and evaluating what is being provided to teachers, follow-up sessions monitored, or if content and material are developmentally appropriate to meet the needs of students.

Weber-Mayrer et al. (2015) added knowing *who* participates in PD is a crucial first step in understanding and designing programs that align with what educators need as experienced learners. Additionally, since adults learn differently PD should be delivered to educators that meet their various stages of development required to engage learners as suggested by the theory of andragogy (Knowles et al., 2005).

Teacher Use of PD and Professional Learning

The principles of andragogy provide a description of how adults learn and how PD can make connections with teachers and their professional learning needs. Glover et al. (2016) investigated the effect of PD for rural elementary school teachers on teacher perspectives, knowledge, and practice. They found PD appeared to make a significant difference in instructional practices for teachers, regarding pedagogical content knowledge and boosting their skill acquisition in instructional practice (Glover et al., 2016). Abdul-Majied et al. (2017) explored the effects PD provided for in-service prekindergarten student teachers and discovered learners used critical and reflective thinking skills in PD and PD contributed to learners developing foundational skills to enhance students learning. Mangope and Mukhopadhyay (2015) reported PD was effective in enhancing educators' skills and led to increased teacher effectiveness in meeting student needs. Gaikhorst et al. (2017) investigated long-term PD effects for beginning teachers of all grade levels in an urban school setting and how the different activities and organizations of the school contributed to sustainability in their classroom. The authors found PD interventions were sustainable and allowed educators to feel their expertise was valued by school leaders and administrators (Gaikhorst et al., 2017).

Labone and Long (2016) explored teaching quality practices that Catholic school teachers of a school-based nature implemented through a PD learning model and found the PD model led to effective implementation of strategies to assist students academically. Moreover, to improve instructional quality practices, prekindergarten educator's PD must be ongoing so that it increases knowledge and skill and include administrators so that there is a web of support for teachers ongoing learning and children's developmental growth (Whalen et al., 2016).

Efforts to provide valuable and lasting PD opportunities for all general education teachers appear to be limited or not accessible (Gaikhorst, 2017). Melhuish et al. (2016) found the quality of PD for prekindergarten educators may be lacking the essentials and should focus more on curriculum content, concept development, and pedagogy to foster children's development in language, self-regulation, early numeracy, and social development. Moreover, the researchers found PD intervention of early childhood educators had a positive outcome and improved educators' professional practice and increased child learning outcomes (Melhuish et al., 2016).

To the extent that andragogy is absent from PD, teachers may not achieve transformation of instruction in literacy that is needed for children's success. According to Louws et al. (2017), school-based teachers frequently do not have a voice or an active role in PD being offered to them. Opportunities for self-reflection are either limited or non-existent, which do not allow them to reflect on experiences (Louws et al., 2017). Labone and Long (2016) suggested it is pivotal to have a system or design for learning components that connect new and existing knowledge in meaningful ways within system-

based PD models for educators. According to Elm and Nordqvist (2019) PD programs for prekindergarten teachers should place a focus on pedagogical content and should closely aligned to teacher professional practice, opportunities to execute instructional strategies, and time to reflect, individually and collectively, to have a more meaningful learning experience. Planning PD allows school-based teachers to be active agents in mastering topics that are relevant to them (Widjaja et al., 2017). King (2016) explored the connection between transformative practice regarding growth of school-based teacher professional knowledge and working collaboratively in a constructivist manner as a model of PD to change their teaching practices and meet students' needs. The findings suggested all school-based teachers in large numbers responded differently to sustainable new practices but overall, the transformative practice was most effective for teachers because it helped educators understand the need for change (King, 2016). Furthermore, since educators respond differently to PD practices, school leaders should make changes and alter methods to meet the needs of educators to increase skills such as literacy pedagogy according to King (2016).

Zareie et al. (2016) explored the content of prekindergarten teachers PD and found although there was a focus on content there was an absence of pedagogy and practice. PD is a continuous process, and teachers should be trained so that skills are acquired to encourage developmental growth of prekindergarten students and content knowledge increases over time with the use of different methods of professional learning (Zareie et al., 2016). Luft et al. (2016) described several delivery models by which "practicing teachers," or anyone responsible for classroom instruction may engage in PD,

including online, face-to-face, and hybrid settings, and all methods had the potential to affect teacher learning when teachers applied strategies as directed. Additionally, continuous learning for educators should develop content knowledge, help teachers integrate their knowledge, and improve pedagogy acquisition (Whitworth & Chiu, 2015).

PD Among Prekindergarten Teachers

Effective PD provides intensive training related to the topic of instruction, adding knowledge to educator's pedagogy in ways that match how adults acquire knowledge (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015). Egert et al. (2018) explored gaps in research on PD and the effects PD has on prekindergarten educator quality and child outcomes, as related to training design, instructional content, and the gap between the improvement of teaching and the benefit to child outcomes. They found when mastery of a set of specific skills or methods was wanted, short-term programs had the most benefit, but intensive training was needed when broad and comprehensive understanding was needed to support long-term PD programs (Egert et al., 2018). Egert et al. (2018) also found the planning of PD should focus on intensive programs related to facilitating successful teacher-child interactions and effective implementation of instruction and a curriculum that stimulates development for young learners. Vujičić and Čamber-Tambolaš (2017) explored prekindergarten teacher perspectives regarding connections between their attitudes, profession, and continuous learning through PD. Moreover, authors found there must be a transformation of PD opportunities to provide continuous improvement of instructional practices through a learning network that includes educators' opinions (Vujičić & Čamber-Tambolaš, 2017).

There appears to be a relationship between teacher knowledge and instructional practices in prekindergarten classrooms. Schachter (2015) believed PD for prekindergarten teachers should be delivered in a way that targets educator skill, knowledge, and disposition, as well as the application of knowledge in practice. According to Schachter et al. (2016), there is a link between PD and changes in teacher instruction for young children that result in a better-quality learning environment. Children in prekindergarten represent a diverse group of individuals with differentiated needs in early literacy skills that are meaningful and providing ongoing PD to help educators acquire knowledge can assist teachers with this goal (Goodrich & Lonigan, 2017). Furthermore, Baker (2018) suggested PD could be more successful if it linked knowledge and practice strategies and provided collaboration opportunities for educators, and if the frequency and timing of PD sessions were intentionally arranged to support ongoing learning.

Although one study showed adequate PD opportunities, these opportunities are not provided to all prekindergarten programs. Most often school leaders and administrators provide educators with preservice training that appears to be mediocre at best, the gaps in research continue to show current PD do not sufficiently support children's early learning (Lin & Magnuson, 2018). There is a need to improve how teachers acquire training and pedagogical knowledge, therefore, prekindergarten teachers should have an autonomous role in planning ongoing PD opportunities (Múñez et al., 2017). Vujicic and Camber Tambolaš (2017) without an active role, prekindergarten teachers must participate in the PD process in efforts to improve practice and increase

knowledge. Educating adults will require knowledge to be on a larger and firmer platform of expertise based on research. Therefore, PD should be structured to develop professional prekindergarten teacher knowledge and skills, while catering to the specific needs and progression competency level of each teacher (Múñez et al., 2017).

To support young learners, prekindergarten teachers must have knowledge that is adequate on how children learn, developmental states relating to language acquisition in efforts to support, guide, and teach young learners (Sheridan & Gjems, 2017). All teachers must view themselves as an authority of their craft by recognizing the value of professional development opportunities that are supported by evidence and best practice and applicable knowledge of what works when attempting to increase student achievement (Boylan & Demack, 2018). Monhan et al. (2017) found effective PD is not only for the educator but based on the needs of the educator. The study conducted by Monhan et al. (2017) looked at rural and urban educator needs from primary and secondary school-based systems, as it related to PD opportunities offered in the form of traditional PD that included staff meetings, workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, in-house training, work attachments and long term in-service training with the intent to help students learning opposed to assisting with improving teaching practice as well, and found educators wanted sustainable effective PD that enhanced their professional practice. Effective and sustainable PD is done in continuous cycles that allows educators to understand and enhance knowledge and skills to meet student's needs. Furthermore, Van Waes et al. (2016) suggested professional learning opportunities such as those offered by PD allows all educators to understand subject matter, pedagogical content

knowledge, and learn new ideas to implement in the classroom to help students academic growth.

PD in Literacy Pedagogy

According to Rollnick (2017), educators need an understanding of content knowledge, and one way to do this is through effective PD strategies. Essential elements for prekindergarten teachers are to improve teacher quality and to build foundations to strengthen educators background in pedagogical practices while deepen their knowledge (Maskit & Firstater, 2016). The benefits of PD are to provide teachers with foundations that allow them to maintain structure meaningful learning environments in the classroom. Williford et al. (2017) found teachers PD in pedagogical content and ongoing professional learning goes far beyond subject matter acquisition, but it increases educators' understanding of how to prepare and structure instruction, support students, and manage classrooms effectively. Content knowledge and pedagogy is pivotal for prekindergarten educators because it is how they demonstrate their competencies, and improve their teaching, knowledge, and skills, outcomes which is essential to professional learning in education (Ping et al., 2018). Additionally, educators should have the ability to design and implement student learning, therefore they must have pedagogical knowledge to accomplish these tasks (Kurniah et al., 2019).

Teachers' professional learning affects their instructional practice because, content knowledge allows adult learners to understand the subject matter (Depaepe & König, 2018). Pedagogical knowledge in early childhood education is essential because it allows teachers to stay current on teaching practices, grow professionally, and strengthen

children's learning (Elm & Nordqvist, 2019). Moreover, teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge are tools for teaching, by enabling educators to understand the diversity and complexity associated with how children learn, and the diversity and complexity of the content to be taught (Mu et al., 2018).

Pedagogical knowledge permits preschool teachers to teach with differentiation to assist all students, thereby allowing educators to gain self-efficacy in developing student mastery of what was taught (Depaepe & König, 2018). If, as Kurniah et al. (2019) indicated, teachers need to experience learner-centered and content-focused PD in order to teach in this way, the use of andragogical practice in PD and multiple delivery options are essential to support teachers-as-learners. Maskit and Firstater (2016) deemed PD an essential element for prekindergarten teachers in improving teacher quality and as the foundation by which to strengthen educators' pedagogical practices and deepen their content knowledge. Likewise, increased attention is needed in providing educators with adequate literacy content, pedagogy, and PD ongoing learning in efforts to provide educators with essential skills.

The need for PD focused on literacy and language is evident in several recent studies. Hindman and Wasik (2017) found oral-language experiences, such as vocabulary development, were absent from the prekindergarten curriculum and teachers spent less than five minutes per day on literacy in prekindergarten classrooms. They also suggested prekindergarten teachers tend to neglect developmentally appropriate engagement of children in high-quality conversations. Whorrall and Cabell (2016) found teachers who were successful in promoting children's literacy and language achievement engaged in

conversations during non-teacher directed activities, used sophisticated vocabulary, and expanded upon open-ended questions. Moreover, Linder et al. (2016) suggested PD models should include the times and duration required for each training strategy, as well as knowing the most effective settings, such as whole group meetings, independent learning, and small group collaborations that meet the needs of educators and guide them in developing children's language and literacy (Linder et al., 2016).

Overall, teachers need PD opportunities that allow them to take ownership of their own learning while encompassing strategies learned through these ongoing learning opportunities regarding literacy content knowledge and pedagogy. Gettinger and Stoiber (2016) investigated the effects of teacher coaching on book reading practices in prekindergarten classrooms and found prekindergarten educators needed a solid foundation in how children develop literacy, in knowledge of pedagogy, and in strategies to promote skills needed to foster student achievement growth (Gettinger and Stoiber, 2016). According to Piper et al. (2018), to achieve literacy goals for struggling students, administrators must maintain ongoing PD for educators as a necessary first step. Additionally, Schachter et al. (2016) found educators with additional knowledge had a more profound effect on children's literacy and language development.

Teacher learning is an ongoing process, and early childhood teachers need continuous and sustainable strategies for implementing content knowledge for students (Nasser et al., 2015). Nasser et al. (2015) explored Head Start teacher perspectives about the structure of PD as it relates to a model that focuses on developing intentional teaching. The findings suggested the participants perspectives had a contribution to

understanding PD models which included large group, on-site, and one-on-one interactions that allowed for an evaluation process was sustainable in providing effectiveness based on the adult learning theory model when applied to their current work (Nasser et al., 2015). Shannon et al. (2015) examined perspectives of 21 preschool teachers about PD they received. Furthermore, they found teacher knowledge when enhanced with adequate high-quality PD strategies, content acquisition, and practice implementation, it significantly increased teacher understand with a firm grasp of the content, self-motivation, and technological self-efficacy in the classroom (Shannon et al., 2015).

Learning how to implement prekindergarten literacy and gaining an understanding in pedagogy will required additional training for prekindergarten educators. Professionals such as administration, school leaders, and teachers must have the educational capabilities relating to pedagogical and content knowledge to support young learners needs (National Research Council, 2015). The Institute of Medicine and National Research Council report suggested information that supports building a culture of higher learning and ongoing professional learning for school leaders, and in turn equip them with knowledge relating to how young children learn to ensure environments that support developmental growth. A study conducted by Duncan et al. (2016) provided insight into school leaders and teachers should take advantage of advances in research-based knowledge and instructional strategies that have been proven effective for developing literacy skills for preschool children. School leaders need to incorporate systems for accountability that include PD that both school leaders and teachers can

benefit from that is designed to improve skills relating to content knowledge and pedagogy for prekindergarten students (Duncan et al., 2016). Furthermore, PD for school principals will allow them to understand educators' strengths and weaknesses in content knowledge in early childhood and help them give specific feedback and support teacher reflection on instruction and strategies most effective in their classroom (De Nisco, 2015).

Nguyen et al. (2018) conducted a study that looked at Head Start and public prekindergarten PD and found with support from administrators, the prekindergarten teachers were able to see a benefit of targeting specific academic domains and exploration differences in classroom level PD, quality improvement, and opportunities to enhance students' academic growth. Research geared towards literacy and pedagogy is limited in the prekindergarten field and opportunities provided for educators that is literacy focused are largely unstudied (Dharamshi, 2018). Additionally, prekindergarten educators must start setting up collaborations that include administrators that will provide all parties with a forum to work together in all areas of teaching and research to help bridge the gap between theory and practice through a community of learners (Dharamshi, 2018).

Importance of Prekindergarten PD in Literacy Pedagogy

Language and literacy development of young children is an essential part of prekindergarten educators' work. Literacy skills are key in assisting children in learning the foundations of language, learning to read, and profoundly influence the way children learn to communicate daily with others. Erickson (2018) conducted a study regarding the

sustainability of mandated literacy standards and found newer teachers had difficulty planning for instruction and often used single view perspectives opposed to having an open mind towards instruction. Educators play an important role in the early years because teachers assist in guiding children early literacy experiences which lay essential foundations for the development of core knowledge, oral language, and social skills (Mantei & Kervin, 2018). And having teachers trained appropriately in language pedagogy is vital to learners being successful throughout their educational journey. Early literacy instruction has fallen short in prekindergarten classrooms, and ways to meet the demands of today's expectations for students is by providing educators with ongoing learning and PD because it is extremely important for teachers to understand how children learn, improve their skills, and teacher effectiveness in literacy instruction (Chiariello, 2018). Teaching strategies should fulfill prekindergarten literacy demands by providing literacy-specifc learning experiences for students. Educators must be adequately trained in literacy pedagogy to meet the demands of students learning needs. Mantei and Kervin (2018) conducted a study to examine prekindergarten and kindergarten teacher literacy learning demands in their classrooms and found needed to understand what children need and gain a better understanding of how our perspectives or visible and invisible pedagogies could help or potentially hinder children's academic growth. Cunningham et al. (2015) found PD, including professional learning communities and coaching, can support preschool teachers in developing the knowledge and skills needed to effectively promote children's emergent literacy. They suggested further research is needed to address the specific linkages between changes in teacher

instruction and student literacy gains (Cunningham et al., 2015). Providing prekindergarten teachers with PD in literacy pedagogy allow educators to gain a deeper understanding of how children learn, provide richer educational experiences, and increase skill and teacher knowledge. In the same way, literacy training and instruction varies across prekindergarten programs across all learning platforms.

Terrell and Watson (2018) found many teachers lacked the knowledge to apply the principles and foundational skills needed to assist young learners develop literacy skills, but they can learn to do so with modeling and additional training such as in content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Barnett et al. (2018) study examined eight public prekindergarten classrooms to understand the effects of state-funded programs on language, literacy, and mathematics had on students. The authors found state prekindergarten programs teachers needed support for learning and teaching that include PD and curriculum instruction to enrich preschooler's education (Barnett et al., 2018). Additionally, Zhang et al. (2015) conducted a study and looked at Head Start teachers teaching content in literacy instruction, and with ongoing learning, over time changes were seen in literacy instruction and found teachers saw academic growth of student's language skills when teachers were provided more elaborate pedagogical knowledge through PD training.

Although teachers play an essential role in fostering high-quality learning opportunities for young learners their training is sometimes insufficient in meeting educators' adult learning needs. Teacher preparation for early childhood teachers is inconsistent, teacher knowledge and educational levels differ, and appear to require less

expertise than elementary teachers, however providing adequate professional development for prekindergarten teachers will foster an environment of teachers with a deeper understanding of how to stimulate a healthy space for early development and learning (Phillips et al., 2016). Cunningham et al. (2015) examined scalable, effective models of PD developed for prekindergarten teachers. Professional learning communities such as coaching or peer collaboration models used for preschool teacher PD can support teachers in developing knowledge and skills needed to promote essential emergent literacy skills effectively (Cunningham et al., 2015). PD for educators can close learning gaps, help teachers link content with instruction, and assist in lying foundations by linking practice with new skills (Epp, 2017). Mangin and Dunsmore (2015) found providing educators with PD learning opportunities can produce change in practice by allowing teachers to understand content matter and pedagogical skills using PD that is focused on literacy. As leaders in the classroom's teacher must demonstrate a certain amount of pedagogical leaderships skill that is why they must have ample opportunities to acquire PD to develop themselves professionally (Fonsén, & Ukkonen-Mikkola, 2019). PD experiences aids teachers in gaining additional foundational knowledge in supporting students' needs which could lead to children developing literacy skills appropriately (Cunningham et al., 2015). Teachers can learn needed skills through the process of modeling also known as coaching or PD methods that focuses on content matter and pedagogical skills that support emergent literacy in classrooms (Heppner, 2016). Also, traditional PD structures along with personalized learning opportunities could result in effective and sustainable practices that could transform teacher instruction

if methods target developing educator skills (Ende, 2016). Additionally, Chacko (2018) stated emerging pedagogies in effective adult learning must involve the process of knowing across the different phases how adults learn, while using professional development as a method to help identify and choose approaches that meet the learners' needs. This is clear in the intersection between content knowledge and pedagogy.

Providing a high-quality learning environment for young learners must incorporate approaches for educators for continuous professional learning, opportunities with self-reflections, and include both school leaders and teachers (National Research Council, 2015). Zhang (2015) looked at Head Start teachers teaching content in literacy instruction and changes over time in literacy and found teachers saw academic growth of student's language skills when teachers were provided instruction and more elaborate pedagogical knowledge through PD training. Researchers suggested a need for change in social language environments of prekindergartners, and PD could result in teachers creating language-stimulating environments that provided significance gains in children's literacy skills (Norling et al., 2015). Planning of effective PD should focus on intensive programs that are long term and related to the topic of instruction needed to support adding knowledge to educator's pedagogy and how adult learning theory influence teachers' knowledge (Weber-Mayrer et al., 2015). In short, effective PD is that which applies andragogical principles to access teachers' prior knowledge, their need to learn, and their need for experienced-based instruction, and engages them in the planning of their own learning.

Summary and Conclusions

Throughout Chapter 2, I provided information regarding the scope of Knowles adult learning theory and how it relates to PD. I also provided resources that examined other forms of PD that were deemed resourceful when coupled with andragogy strategies in prekindergarten classrooms. The studies provide background information on the several models of PD and findings related to each study. Further research suggested by Zein (2016) relating to how all teachers acquire PD was suggested for more intense examination of needs and beliefs and educators understanding regarding training, teacher efficacy, and teaching practices for advancing professional advancement. Korthagen (2017) noted a gap between theory and practice in PD offered to educators during pre-service or in-service professional learning opportunities. This study is needed because it addressed the gap relating to planning of effective PD and educators having an active role in making decisions on the form of PD on literacy pedagogy. Gaps in research further show a need for an investigation of PD strategies and how literacy content, pedagogy, and ongoing learning can extend knowledge for teachers by identifying strengths or areas of concern based on evaluation methods. In Chapter 3, I continued to explore information relating to adult learning theory and the perspectives of preschool teachers regarding PD in literacy pedagogy. I gave an in-depth look into how the research and design, methodology, participants, and data analysis will assist in my quest for insight into the study topic.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy. In this chapter, I present the research design stating the central concepts of my study and rationale, and explain aspects of my role as the researcher. The role of the researcher highlights the expectations related to my role, biases, and a description of perceived ethical issues and how I addressed them. I also discuss the qualitative research design chosen, as well as the methodology, including participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis, issues of trustworthiness, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

Three RQs guided this study:

RQ1: How do prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ2: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem-solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ3: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

The central phenomenon of investigation was prekindergarten teacher perspectives regarding PD being offered relating to literacy pedagogy. I conducted a basic qualitative study using interviews. This approach using open-ended questions followed the tradition of social constructivism in that I constructed knowledge of participants' view of their experiences regarding PD being offered to them in

collaboration with participants as they described their experiences (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I considered other possible research methodologies such as mixed methods, and quantitative and determined they were not best for this research. A mixed-methods approach combines qualitative and quantitative approaches with extensive data collection and analysis of textual and numerical data (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). However, human experiences cannot be numerically analyzed (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative research focuses on social events and seeks to explore, describe, or explain a social phenomenon while attempting to make meaning of people's experiences, situations, or events (Leavy, 2014). According to Leavy (2014), qualitative research provides understanding of an aspect of life in a naturalistic setting. Quantitative research focuses on the measurement of variables in numerical form (Little, 2013). Because the purpose of my study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy, a quantitative approach was not appropriate.

Other qualitative designs such as ethnography, grounded theory, and phenomenology were considered for this study. Ethnography, also known as participant observation, usually involves extensive time in the field with attention given to detailed observation data and interview evidence (Yin, 2018). An ethnographic design would not have yielded participant perspectives as efficiently as interviews, so I did not choose ethnography. Grounded theory is the process of developing theories with a shift from individual knowledge toward collective knowledge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Yin, 2018). In my study, I did not attempt to develop a general theory of teacher perspective but rather sought to explore teacher perspectives. Phenomenology, the study of common

lived experiences and their meanings from the perspective of the individuals, could also be applied to single case studies and help in understanding the way ideas are perceived, the way they appear in experiences, or the meanings they assume (Smith, 2018). Phenomenology could have been applied in my study as an exploration of the phenomenon of PD from the perspective of prekindergarten teachers, but my purpose was not to explore all aspects of the PD phenomenon. Instead, my focus was limited to the perspectives of the teachers in this study. Similarly, the case study design is used to view a phenomenon from multiple vantage points and includes a variety of data collection methods (Yin, 2018). My study was focused on exploring the perspectives of prekindergarten teachers in their own words. This was accomplished through individual interviews using a basic qualitative design.

Role of the Researcher

I was the sole researcher in this study and at no point did I join as a participant. As described by Creswell (2016), a qualitative researcher studies people in the context of their previous experiences, including how they think or react, while interacting with individuals and documenting the information they provide in a nonobtrusive naturalistic manner. I conducted one-on-one interviews by asking each participant open-ended questions during a telephone interview session that I recorded using a digital application. Although I was the researcher, I was also a mandated reporter and it was my obligation to report any suspicion of child abuse and neglect revealed during interviews. My professional role as a program evaluator was separate from the role of the researcher. I did not function as a program evaluator and did not report on any issues related to that

role. My role as the sole researcher involved designing the study, securing participant consent, conducting data collection via individual interviews, transcribing interviews, analyzing content, and analyzing data (see Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the researcher, I explored all possible research instruments to collect and analyzed the data for a deep understanding of the phenomenon for this study (see Neal et al., 2015).

In my position as a prekindergarten program evaluator, I had worked for 6 years for the state that was the location of this study. My job is to monitor private and public before- and after-school childcare programs for compliance with state regulations. In checking compliance, I determine whether teachers have completed background checks related to criminal history and abuse allegations and other personal documents, I monitor professional development, I check student files for immunizations and other vital records needed for school, and I observe instruction. At the end an instructional observation, I provide a summary letter to the teacher regarding my findings. As a program evaluator, I had no personal relationship with anyone who was included in this study, and I did not have any authority over any educator in this district, including the authority to make decisions related to the hiring, firing, funding, or other process related to the teachers or to the school district as a whole. My job as a program evaluator is to provide prekindergarten teachers with resources on developmentally appropriate practices and support in compliance with the rules that govern prekindergarten as they relate to student safety. I did not provide PD to any school district, but I made sure classrooms had enough materials, classroom equipment was safe, and the playground equipment and surfaces were adequate for children. My position as a program evaluator has afforded me

familiarity with the dynamics of this school district. As a program evaluator, I shared a common language and expertise with each participant in the study, and this allowed me to gather important data that were unique and relevant to this study (see Dwyer & Buckle, 2018).

I took measures to minimize any interference of my biases with the integrity of the study. I collected data and made notations in a personal reflective journal (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I used strategies such as reflexivity, as described by Creswell and Poth (2018), to examine my experiences, biases, and values and ensure I did not interject my opinions or prime participant responses to validate my preexisting opinions (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Listening skills are essential because researchers must understand what is said and ask follow-up questions as needed to clarify their understanding of each participant's perspectives (Yin, 2018). I was an alert participant in the interview process, engaging in active listening and listening for cues to expand the conversation based on what participants said (see Yin, 2018).

To minimize biases during the data collection process, I recorded and transcribed responses to ensure accurate data collection and to avoid preexisting assumptions and hypotheses (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). The reflective journal allowed me to document any perceived and unperceived biases or assumptions related to this qualitive study using interviews (see Noble & Smith, 2015). I did not include people whom I had monitored or who were part of my current caseload.

In any study there is the possibility ethical issues will arise. As the researcher, I had a moral responsibility to respect all participants and show concern for each person's

well-being, welfare, and justice (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I always took care in collecting and reporting data to ensure confidentiality and to avoid the inference of a power imbalance (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). I understood that I must not show partiality toward participants' responses or any results that may be revealed through this research. There were no incentives. Participation in this study was voluntary, and participants were free to exit at any time if they did not wish to continue with the study.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population of focus for this study was prekindergarten teachers who work in a large public school district in the Southeast region of the United States. According to internal reports, the target school district was committed to improving instruction by providing their educators with PD in the form of in-service ongoing learning opportunities throughout the school year. The sampling strategy that was used was purposeful maximum selection to understand the different perspectives of the problem, process, or event as experienced by each participant relating to PD experiences (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). The potential participants would have been hired by the target school district, and prekindergarten teachers would have participated in PD for 3 or more years. I did not include people whom I had monitored or who were part of my current caseload. The school is an urban public school district and provides PD to all educators of the school system, but PD for prekindergarten teachers is geared toward the developmental abilities of young learners and is not made available to teachers in the entire school. The research site was chosen through purposeful sampling, and the target

district is a large urban district with many prekindergarten teachers who are provided targeted PD by the district administration. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), purposeful sampling is used when the researcher selects multiple samples to show different perspectives to generate the greatest information into what is being studied.

The participants of this study included 12 public prekindergarten teachers in the target district who had participated in PD for 3 or more years. I located email addresses of prekindergarten teachers via the district's public access website and emailed an invitation to every third name on the prekindergarten teacher email list. Using this method, I reached out to at least 50 teachers. I thanked everyone who responded but included the first 12 volunteers, and I held the remaining volunteers in reserve in case one of the 12 withdrew or was discovered to not meet selection criteria. Criteria for inclusion in the study were that each teacher had worked as a prekindergarten teacher in the target district for at least 3 years, and that each teacher had participated in PD provided to prekindergarten teachers by administrators in the target school district. In the target state, teachers in all prekindergarten classrooms who are certified through the Department of Education are required to participate in 30 hours of PD every year with at least 6 hours in literacy content. As a program evaluator, I was aware that this district met this requirement. Additionally, anyone I had monitored in the past or was monitoring at the time of the study was excluded from participating in the study. As I welcomed the first 12 volunteers in a reply email, I asked each to confirm that they met the inclusion criteria.

The number of participants and the rationale for this number was based on purposeful sampling because small samples could show different perspectives to generate

the greatest information into what is being studied (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). This sample size of 12 prekindergarten participants was appropriate for this study and was guided by the premise there are no exact requirements or standards regarding selecting sample sizes (see Malterud et al., 2016). The sample size of this study was assumed to be sufficient to reach data saturation, permit data analysis, and illuminate the aim of the study, while also being realistic for the time allotted for this study (see Malterud et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

I identified, contacted, and recruited participants via the school district public email addresses. I recruited 12 prekindergarten teachers from three different school campuses. A recruitment letter was sent to teachers via school email addresses that were available on the internet. The letter included my school contact information. I did not send a recruitment letter to teachers whom I had monitored or were currently monitoring as a program evaluator because they were excluded from this research in an effort to maintain the integrity of this study.

Instrumentation

The main instrument for data collection in this study was the interview guide (see Appendix A). I designed the seven interview questions to answer the three research questions that guided this study. I applied Interview Questions 1 and 2, about teacher role or involvement in the planning of PD in literacy pedagogy, to answer RQ1, about how prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy. I answered RQ2, about how prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem-solving included in PD offered in literacy

pedagogy, by using responses to Interview Questions 3 and 4. To answer RQ3, regarding how prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy, I used answers to Interview Questions 5 and 6. Interview Question 7 offered participants an opportunity to add anything more they wanted to tell me regarding PD in literacy pedagogy.

I used additional probing questions to draw out more in-depth responses from perspective participants. The seven interview questions were designed to elicit discussions while allowing me to explore themes that may arise (see Creswell, 2016). In addition, during the interviews, I kept field notes to indicate ideas that occurred to me and to record participants' facial expressions, gestures, or other nonverbal communication that was not captured by the interview recording. To validate the interview questions, I asked an expert in the field, who holds a doctoral degree in early childhood education, to review my interview questions in light of the study problem, purpose, and research questions. This expert, who is professor of early childhood education at a college in the United States, reviewed my interview questions for content validity. This expert suggested the research questions needed no revisions to collect pertinent data.

I also was an instrument for data collection in this study because I conducted the interviews, selected and analyzed data, and drew conclusions. To control my biases, I used a reflective journal to record my thoughts related to the process and refinement of my ideas (see Dempsey et al., 2016). Reflective journaling allowed me to record in-the-moment reflections and make meaning of ideas, feelings, concerns, thoughts, and self-reflection (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Reflective journaling is a strategy that can

facilitate reflexivity by allowing the researcher to control their bias and assumptions and become consciously aware of what is being recorded (Ortlipp, 2008). In addition, I employed strategies that ensured the dependability of the data by asking each participant to confirm the accuracy of their analyzed data.

Sufficiency of the data collection instrument was supported by an open-ended, unstructured line of questioning that encouraged participant responses that were detailed and inclusive of what the participant believed was important (see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This process allowed me to gather answers and develop the story of participant perspectives. Open-ended interview questions allowed me to collect spontaneous and flexible information while eliciting rich information about participants' personal experiences and perspectives regarding PD (see Carter et al., 2014).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After gaining IRB approval (09-28-20-0392598), I chose names from the email addresses listed on each school's public website to recruit 12 early childhood prekindergarten teachers from three different school campuses, using the method of selecting every third name listed. I asked prospective participants to provide a personal email address to use in all subsequent study communication, to maintain the confidentially of participants. I then emailed prospective participants the inclusion criteria and the consent form. I asked them to reply with "I consent" if they met the inclusion criteria and wished to participate. As volunteers replied with their consent, I asked for their phone number to use for the interview, and I suggested a day and time for

the interview. If the suggested day and time was not convenient for the participant, we negotiated a day and time that was mutually convenient.

I conducted interviews by telephone. I read the questions as scripted (see Appendix A) but in a way that was conversational and responsive to the information provided by the participant, which Garbarski et al. (2016) described as obtaining data in a collaborative format through talk. I audio recorded each interview and took field notes using pen and paper. Each session lasted 45 to 60 minutes, depending on each participant and their willingness to freely share ideas. I prompted participants to expand on their responses if responses seemed minimal. Once the interview was concluded, I thanked the participant for talking with me. I told them to expect an emailed transcript of their interview so they could review that for accuracy prior to my embarking on data analysis.

Data Analysis Plan

I transcribed each interview by uploading the voice recording to the online transcription tool Otter and allowed the system to transcribe the data. I then continued by verifying and correcting the transcript by reading line by line and comparing the online transcript to the audio file. I then emailed the transcript to each participant so they could review it for accuracy and suggest any changes they deemed appropriate. After I received from participants any changes to the transcripts, I used participant-verified transcripts as the basis for my analysis. I added the reflective journal commentary and field notes, such as notations of pauses, laughter, and changes in vocal tone. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), including memos or notes helps to develop a sense of the data, identify emergent ideas, and create a system for quick review of important data. The data analysis

was inductive because I interpreted ideas as they emerged from the transcripts (see Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I used descriptive coding, or topic coding, which was considered appropriate for beginning qualitative researchers (see Saldaña, 2016). During the first cycle of coding, codes were created from a single word to a full paragraph or an entire page of text (see Saldaña, 2016). I highlighted the words and phrases from transcripts that appeared to convey meaning relevant to my study. Once the first reading and coding of the data was completed, I repeated the process, noting any additional codes or removing codes depending on what I learned from the data and what seemed relevant to my study.

I followed coding with a process of systematically arranging coded ideas into categories, so that similar ideas were grouped together (see Saldaña, 2016). I organized coded words and phrases into categories, and then grouped categories into over-arching themes. The process of creating categories allowed me to see links between ideas and began to shape the data into a meaningful synthesis of participant perspectives (see Saldaña, 2016). Once the data were regrouped, I made meaning of the data or gained a better understanding of what has been collected. I then developed overarching themes by combining categories. Emerging themes constituted a form of storytelling, as the data created a coherent set of ideas offered by participants (see Saldaña, 2016). By identifying emerging themes, I began to understand the participants' perspectives of their professional development in literacy pedagogy.

Discrepant findings allowed me to portray all aspects of an issue while at the same time revealed potential flaws in the construction of instruments, unintended

ambiguity, or insufficient depth in participants' responses (see DiLoreto & Gaines, 2016). In an interview study, a discrepant case is most likely to occur when a participant contradicts what they have said earlier in the interview, or the data does not match other participant views. Discrepant findings occur when there is a reference in what was communicated or documented and what was found regarding the explored phenomenon (see Yin, 2018). If I identified this action, I asked the interviewee at that time about the occurrence. And, if noticed during the data transcription phase, I asked the participant to review and correct at that time. If I did not notice until the data analysis, or if the person did not clarify what they meant by saying two things that were the opposite of each other, then I included this in the analysis as a discrepant case. I discussed this more as it arose in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is achieved with different components of qualitative research such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability which together create authenticity in any study (Klenke et al., 2016). I supported trustworthiness because I included elements to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the data and my results.

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is linking the data to the research so that it is clear, creditable, and believable (Klenke et al., 2016). To establish credibility, I employed the strategy of reflexivity in this qualitative study. Reflexivity is an examination of the researcher's personal beliefs, practices, and judgements; the researcher engages in self-

understanding about their biases, values, and experiences and what it can bring to the research (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Researchers can refer to their reflexive journal to get a better understanding of the findings and conclusions and if they have been interpreted in a manner that is credible (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity allowed me to have self-awareness and self-reflection in attempts to monitor and eliminate any prejudges, biases, or predispositions by using a reflective journal, self-reflection, and critical self-awareness (Klenke et al., 2016). I used my reflective journal to ask questions, record ideas, make meaning, and chart my thoughts and emotions, and recorded any concerns that arose over the time of data collection (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Lastly, I included any interpretations I observed and recorded in my field notes, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016). Credibility was also supported through participant transcript review, which confirmed the accuracy of transcript data (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability according to Creswell & Poth (2018), is based upon the results from a qualitative study can be generalized or transferred to other settings (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). Readers had the opportunity to review what I presented via the data and decide if the results could be applied to their own settings based on the thick descriptions of contextual details and background insformation, I provided information to create a narrative interpretation of the data, as directed by Creswell and Poth (2018). The goal of transferability is to gather descriptive, context-relevant data, from which readers may make their own judgments of transferability, rather than produce statements that may or may not apply to other particular populations or settings (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) write that the researcher's task is to situate a qualitative study in its specific context while still supporting transferability to other contexts. In this study, my description of the sample and setting in my study, my explication of how codes and themes were derived from the data, and use of verbatim evidence from participant interviews, all supported transferability.

Dependability

Dependability relates to the stability of the data collected, so that similar results might be obtained if the study were replicated by other researchers and includes that the findings are consistent with the evidence present in the data (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Transcript review by participants helped to ensure dependability of my study results, because, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016), it ensured my data were transcribed without bias or filtering on my part. Such participant validation of raw data was supported by Creswell and Creswell (2018) as a method to ensure dependability. In addition, I asked participants interview questions that were verified and validated by an outside expert for clarity and to ensure they were easily understood.

Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree of neutrality in the reporting the data of the research and having an agreement between two or more persons that are independent from the study and the findings can be confirmed or corroborated (see sRavitch & Carl, 2016). Participant responses represented the findings of this study during the interview process, additionally, they did not represent any viewpoints or researcher bias. I presented the actual words of participants as evidence in answering the research questions, and so avoid

conflating my own ideas with the perspectives offered by participants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Finally, I included all details relating to how the data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed to provide a transparent report of findings to readers.

Reflexivity is having an awareness of personal beliefs, values, and awareness of previous experiences that can result in researcher bias, however, strategies such as using a reflective journal and note taking can prevent interference throughout this study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To maintain reflexivity, I took notes and wrote in my reflective journal to assist with bias as well as kept notations when I coded. The notations included notes taken during sorting and coding of the transcription process.

Ethical Procedures

First, I obtained the approval of the Walden University IRB (09-28-20-0392598). I took measures throughout this study to ensure all participants were treated respectfully, safe, and confidentiality were maintained of everyone involved such as using a reflective journal and taking notes. I stated the study purpose, process, procedures, and any contact information related to this research were provided. Potential interviewees were invited via email to voluntarily participate in my study via the recruitment message and the accompanying request for informed consent in the same email. The documents were included and explanation of participants rights, voluntarily right to ask questions, the right to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, how confidentiality and privacy was ensured, associated risks, and pertinent contact information related to this study. The emailed letter outlined the interview process (e.g., there were interview questions, the location which was the participant choice since this were phone interviews,

how long the interview would take, and the member checking process). Since participants were recruited from a public-school directory on the internet, interested candidates were asked to reply to the email stating “I consent” and provided a confidential email address, phone number, and time of day they wanted me to further contact them. Once participants were chosen, a code was assigned to each participant to track their interview responses and ensure confidentiality.

Participants were provided copies of their informed consent and reminded there were no incentives for participating in this study, I am legally obligated to report any suspicion of child abuse, and they could reserve their right to refuse participation or withdraw from the study at any time. Even though I am a Program Evaluator for the target state, this role is separate from that role. I was not in a position to influence any participant, and my role is solely the researcher during the process of this study. Participants was ensured any information provided was strictly confidential and protected by me as the researcher. Complete anonymity and confidentiality were assured to all participants before, during, and after the study. Any identifying information was redacted immediately to include names, places, or reference to any organizations from this study. The data collected were securely stored in my home office on my password protect personal computer. Any paper data such as reflective journals, field notes, and jump drives was stored in a locked file cabinet and I held the key.

The guidelines of Walden University and precautions outlined by the IRB were strictly followed and used in this study of a naturalistic nature. Any materials such as print, recording, journals, anecdotes or notes, and digital content will be destroyed after 5

years using a hired shredder company. No incentives or favors were given to anyone taking part in this study and no coercion was used to pressure participants of the study. There were no ethical issues since I had no connections with any participant that were included in my study because I did not select anyone I have monitored or currently monitor. Participants were informed of my role as a program evaluator, and I assured each participant I do not hold any conflict of interest for this study other than to gather data. Also, no other ethical issues arose as I only include participants that I do not monitor, evaluate, or I directly have a personal relationship. Participants were told they had the right to withdraw from this study at any time if they chose to exit the study.

Summary

In this Chapter I outlined the research method, research design and rationale, the role of the researcher, methodology, participant selection, instrumentation, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical procedures. The research questions were used to guide this study by gathering information from preschool teachers associated with their perspectives on effective PD in literacy pedagogy. Trustworthiness were maintained, participation in this study was completely voluntary, and at any time, anyone could withdraw from this study at any time. Results will be presented later in the following chapters. Chapter 4, I provided an introduction into the chapter as well as provided information on the settings and an in-depth explanation on the data collection and analysis process, present data that supported the findings in the results section, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives on district-sponsored PD offered in literacy pedagogy. I used the following three RQs informed by Knowles's adult learning theory to guide my study:

RQ1: How do prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ2: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem-solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

RQ3: How do prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy?

Chapter 4 includes the results from open-ended interviews and analysis of the data related to public prekindergarten teacher perspectives on district-sponsored PD offered in literacy pedagogy. I describe the setting, data collection process, and data analysis process. I then present my analysis of the data and the results of my study, and I present evidence of the results.

Setting

The participants of this study were all located in the Southeast United States. Due to restrictions imposed to combat the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of this study, I conducted interviews by telephone. Participants chose to speak to me on a private home phone or cell phone in their home. Before I began the interviews, I asked participants if they were in a private, quiet space where we would not be interrupted during the call, which could last for 45 minutes or more based on participant responses. Each participant

agreed they were in a quiet, comfortable, private space in their home where no interruptions would occur.

All interview calls were conducted by participants' private cell phone or home phone. During one call, one participant stated she was having trouble hearing me speak. The participant stated she was having issues with getting a good Wi-Fi connection with her cell phone and stated she needed to call me back on her personal home phone. The participant called back immediately, and I again ensured she was in a private, quiet space where we would not be interrupted for at least 45 minutes. I went over the informed consent with each participant. Additionally, I informed each participant the conversation was being recorded via my password-protected technology, my personal cell phone, and my personal iPad tablet as a backup recording device. Participants agreed to continue with the interviews. The recorded responses were clear on both devices. No other issues arose during the telephone interview and recording process.

Twelve teachers participated in this study. At the start of each interview, I confirmed with participants that they met participation criteria, including holding the professional role of prekindergarten teacher and participating in prekindergarten literacy PD for 3 or more years in the target school district. The range of years of literacy PD participation ranged from 5 to 15 years. All participants were female. Three participants held a postbaccalaureate degree; the remaining nine participants held bachelor's degrees. Years of teaching ranged from 5 to 29 years. Demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Participants' Gender, Education, Years of Teaching, and Participation in Literacy PD

Participants	Gender	Grade level	Years teaching	Years literacy PD participation
A	Female	Bachelor's	12	12
B	Female	Bachelor's	21	15
C	Female	Doctorate	12	12
D	Female	Bachelor's	7	6
E	Female	Bachelor's	8	9
F	Female	Bachelor's	15	10
G	Female	Bachelor's	13	10
H	Female	Master's	29	15
I	Female	Bachelor's	17	5
J	Female	Bachelor's	5	5
K	Female	Master's	15	13
L	Female	Bachelor's	14	11

Data Collection

I located prospective participants using purposive sampling, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). I created a list of email addresses for prekindergarten teachers using information on the target district's public access website because prekindergarten teachers would inform the research problem and research questions of this study. I sent an email invitation to every third name on the prekindergarten teacher

email list. I accepted the first 12 teachers who volunteered. At the start of each interview, I confirmed with participants that they met the study's participation criteria.

Data collection happened as described in Chapter 3, through individual interviews conducted by telephone. Interviews took place over a span of 3 weeks between October 7 and October 27, 2020. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 55 minutes. I audio recorded the interviews on my passcode-protected iPhone and used a backup device, my password-protected iPad, to ensure no part of the conversation was lost due to technical issues on the first device. I transcribed the audio files using the Voice Memo recorder application on my phone. Any PD taken during the current school year was attended virtually because of restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of this study.

Data Analysis

Once the interviews were completed, I manually transcribed each transcript using the Voice Memo recorder within 1 week of each interview and transferred the data to Microsoft Word. I checked the accuracy of each transcription by reading the text as I listened to the audio. I was careful to record participants' responses verbatim and without editing. I then emailed each transcript to participants for their review and possible corrections or additions. No participant requested a change to their transcript. I uploaded the documents into NVivo for storage and for the ability to view all of the documents in one place. I printed each transcript via a home printer. Reading line by line, I coded each interview manually, as suggested by Saldaña (2016).

Preparing the Data

Once participants completed their review of transcripts, I reviewed the interview transcripts, field notes, and reflective journal notes I recorded from each participant, following processes described by Saldaña (2016). To prepare the interview transcripts for analysis, I printed three copies of each transcript to provide at least one original version in the event a mistake was made as I highlighted and made notes. On one copy, I used the wrong highlighter, and it was corrected on the clean copy of an extra printed transcript. Then, I previewed and reread the transcripts to get an idea of items that could be coded using methods of precoding.

Precoding

Precoding, as defined by Saldaña (2016), is the process of going through text or relevant participant quotes before the coding process and bolding, underlining, highlighting, coloring, or identifying passages that stuck out or could become the title or a part of the framework of the study. I began reading line by line during descriptive precoding or topic precoding, making links in the data that were comparable while conducting preliminary analysis by assigning codes (see Saldaña, 2016). In the margins or note section, I jotted down anecdotal notes from my journal of the original interviews that were not recorded electronically, such as long pauses or sighs that seemed important. Because I begin to run out of colors using highlighters, I uploaded the transcripts into a Word document and created two columns. Additionally, I kept each transcript open on the computer in the event I needed to reference what was done on another document. One column was used for the original transcript, and the second column was used to house the

precoded passages, text, and phrases for all 12 transcripts. I identified 383 precodes during this process.

Coding

Next, I created another Word document for the precoded data and combined all of the precoded passages, being careful to identify the beginning and end of a new participant transcript. In the same Word document, I created a second column for the initial codes. Once everything was on the computer, I began the descriptive coding. Descriptive coding allowed me to identify codable words that were significant to the research, such as *share ideas*, *collaborate with peers*, *beneficial conversation*, *real-time feedback*, *resources*, *just sitting and listening*, *coaching*, *modeling*, *engaging*, *share-outs*, and *hands-on PD*.

This method was used so I could easily identify the data later and address questions such as why I considered a code or theme or how the data were relevant to my study, as suggested by Saldaña (2016). I narrowed the precodes down based on reference by participants, and codes were then selected based on the relation to the theory, ideas that were unique or unexpected, or the frequency of the word or phrase. For example, the phrase "just sitting there" was repeated a total of 68 times by all participants at least one time. I deemed this phrase significant to code. Similarly, having autonomy or "allowing teachers to help" with the planning process I deemed relevant to code because it reflected the conceptual framework of this study. Additionally, I coded participants' statements that they believed 50% or more of their training involves sitting and listening as another relevant code. Based on similar criteria, I identified 177 codes, such as *hands-on*, *share*

out, and *collaborate with peers*, which were some of the most frequent preliminary codes identified.

Categories and Themes

Through careful analysis, code patterns were identified in relation to one another, which allowed me to map the data and formulate categories. For example, the statements "you could say this is really what I'm needing some things that you know, specific to a skill, especially in pre-K, because number one, there's not a lot of pre-K based literacy" and "reason being because those PD sessions, geared towards, grades K through 5" led to the categories such as *literacy PD complaints* and *absence of prekindergarten specific content*. These categories allowed me to formulate the theme, *challenges with PD*. During the analysis process, 13 categories were identified.

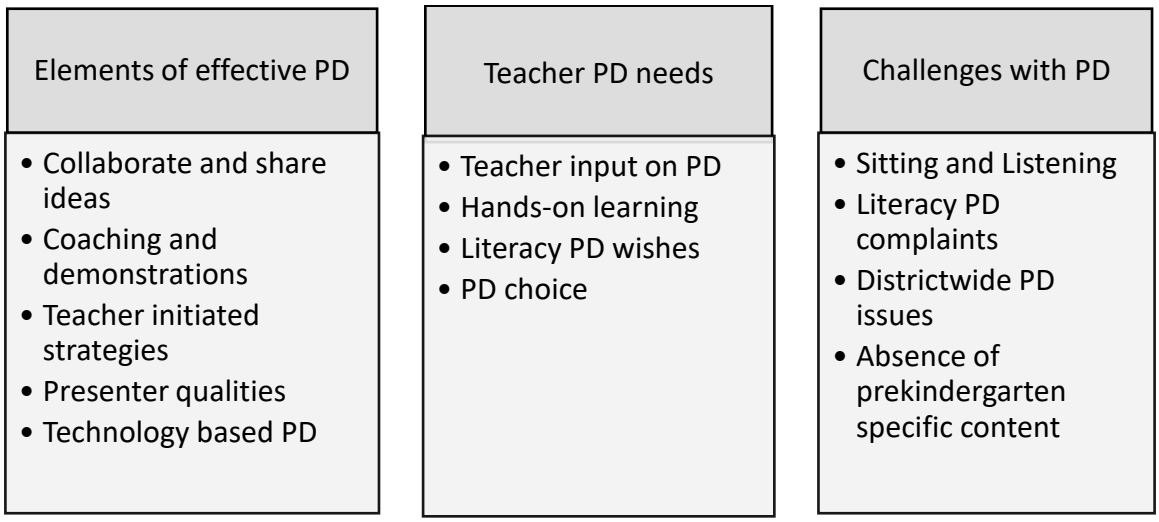
The themes formulated represented important concepts based on participants' recall of their experience, some patterns, and commonality of the data, as described by Saldaña (2016). Through this process, I developed three themes: *elements of effective PD, teacher PD needs*, and *challenges with PD*. I formulated these themes to tell the story of the participants' experiences such as Participant C stating "resource in other areas of literacy I can implement in the classroom. Like reading words, um, CVC words." I also wanted to include the statement from Participant A, which provided more insight into teacher perspectives on PD: "once a month we have round table PD's and you go from station to station and different rooms with that literacy curricula and also with your curriculum map." These perceptions, along with other participants' comments, led me to create the theme *elements of effective PD*. This theme was formulated based on the

broader understanding of what I determined the participants were stating about their experience.

Additionally, the category *teacher input on PD* suggested the theme *teacher PD needs*. This theme described the support teachers identified as lacking or insufficient in current PD opportunities. According to Participant J, PD relating to the concept of the "responsive classroom, which had some literacy elements, is no longer offered by the district." The last theme, *challenges with PD,* was formulated based on the responses from the categories *sitting and listening* and *districtwide PD issues*. This theme included statements such as one by Participant J relating to PD sessions: "I would still feel like I needed support in literacy…. I would say that it's probably geared 50-50 and I do like that a lot better than just sitting and listening." Additionally, Participant E stated in relation to PD provided in literacy pedagogy that "the PD now I don't get anything out of it, but a lot of times it's not necessarily a new concept." The association of categories and themes is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Categories and Themes Derived From Data



The coding process allowed me to identify 383 precodes, 177 codes, 13 categories, and three themes. No discrepant cases were identified because no data failed to fit into emerging patterns (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Results

The three RQs that guided my study were (a) how do prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy? (b) how do prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem-solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy? and (3) how do prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy? In the following sections I present results by RQs with associated themes.

Results for RQ1

RQ1 asked "how do prekindergarten teachers describe their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy?" Teachers indicated PD was provided on 3 consecutive days by the district, in what they termed "preservice." However, according to Participant J, teachers do not have a voice in planning PD: "of what is actually required of us, we do not have a lot to do with the planning of that."

Prekindergarten teachers described their belief that they are the best sources for understanding the daily struggles that can arise when teaching young students. Participant J, "if we were to plan PD, then we could kinda tell what we feel. Like if we need more support, we can ask for it." Participant H stated teachers could have the opportunity to: "be creative with the lesson in PDs if we could plan." Participant F, "teachers receiving and planning the PD understand what they need and the coaching and advising they need." Participant E, "I think if they could ever plan a professional development based around teacher collaboration, where you can work from one school to the other because so many teachers have great ideas."

Other statements suggested a benefit to teacher morale that might follow from the opportunity to plan PD. Participant F stated planning PD would: "definitely help teachers to realize, okay, we're not taken for granted. They hear us because we're the ones that are in the classroom." Participant F said, "teachers voices are being heard." Participant A stated if teachers were allowed to plan PD it would be "effective for all teachers because then you have the people that are actually in the classroom giving input on what they need to help make their crafts." Participant F noted, "It would definitely, truly, help the

morale for a teacher to not only continue to teach their kids, but also teach with some kind of, you know, champion. Participant C summed up this sentiment by suggesting: "give teachers the opportunity to, um, like plan, and, create surveys and see what the needs of those teachers are, um, what they may want."

Participants also wanted PD that was led by their teaching colleagues or was better connected to their own contexts. Participant D, "I think there should be more teachers leading professional development, Um, especially where teachers are able to give." Participant K added, "I think I would plan a PD on the different centers that we have in the classroom and more specific ways of how to adjust the centers to go along with the curriculum. I think that would be really good professional development session." Despite the fact that teachers in this study believed they were best suited to determine their PD needs, and despite the fact that teachers in this study suggested being able to plan their PD according to those needs would boost their morale by allowing teachers to have autonomy through planning, teachers in this study said teachers' involvement in planning PD was not part of their experience.

Results for RQ2

RQ2 asked, how do prekindergarten teachers describe the level of experience-based learning and problem solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy? Teachers shared what they perceived to be a low level of experience-based learning and problem solving in literacy pedagogy. None of the participants indicated experience-based learning was part of PD they had taken. For example, Participant I, "most of the PD is where we are just sitting and listening to a presenter." This sentiment was echoed

by Participant K: “I’ve been to many PD that are pretty much just a PowerPoint and reading over the PowerPoint and not really very in depth.” Participant K continued, PD is “going to be at least 65% of just sitting and listening to someone.” Participant D agreed, reporting that many PD sessions are: “just sitting in front of the presenter.” Participant L, “6 solid years of the literary instruction, and I would say most of it is lecture style.” Participant C stated relating to PD sessions: “when I look back on some of the PD sessions, I attend is pretty much your kind of like sitting there.”

Participants reported finding lecture-based PD uninspiring, even boring. Participant A stated about PD: “I feel like I’m just sleeping for eight hours and I’m really not.” Participant G agreed, “it’s more meaningful when I have, um, PD from teachers and colleagues and peers ……so to me, it’s not really a specific literacy focused professional development, and it’s definitely not really hands-on.” Participant J could recall experience-based PD and said: “I would say that it’s probably geared 50/50, and I do like that a lot better than just sitting and listening. I feel like I learned more from that.” Responses to interview questions associated with RQ2 indicated that the level of experience-based learning and problem solving included in PD offered in literacy pedagogy is very low, and maybe not evident at all.

Results for RQ3

RQ3 asked, How do prekindergarten teachers describe the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy? This question allowed me to further understand teacher perspectives on issues they perceive are related

to PD provided by their school leaders and administration. Results fell into three main areas: needs, quality of PD, and prekindergarten focus.

Participants were in general agreement that PD in literacy is needed. Participant E, “you could say this is really what I’m needing some things that are specific to a skill, especially in pre-K, because number one, there’s not a lot of pre-K-based literacy PD.” Participant F indicated teachers: “would need learning tools and literacy skills. So, for me, knowing where students are helps. PD sessions we would need in literacy to cater to, to enhance, our student development.” Participant C hinted at the complexity of their literacy PD needs, saying: “we need PD like, early literacy, like cracking a code.” Participant J suggested the need for literacy PD is shared by experienced teachers along with newer teachers: “I would say that even after teaching all of these years, I would still feel like I needed support in teaching literacy.”

Quality concerns in literacy PD centered around a desire for specific, relevant, fresh information, much of which participants indicated was lacking in PD they have taken. The lack of new ideas was cited by Participant E, “a lot of times it’s kind of like the same strategies in preservice. A lot of times when I go to the PD it’s something either I already used or something I’ve already seen. The PD now I don’t get anything out of it, but a lot of times it’s not necessarily a new concept.” Participant B suggested that a two-tiered system may affect PD quality for pre-kindergarten teachers, based on differences in the teaching staff, saying: “I started in kindergarten, there is actually a lot of professional development that goes along with in early childhood. Now, I’m sitting in a classroom with teachers that were not certified.”

Lack of fresh ideas was matched by lack of specific information. Participant G, “I feel like we don’t get a whole lot of training on that specific area in literacy. We need more just like literacy as a whole.” Participant I reported that sessions appear to be a: “generic form of professional development that we may have where it’s kind of like you’re just doing, a blanket overall style of PD.” Participant C stated, “we can use letter recognition, different strategies and resources during preservice that we can pull from to implement in the classroom.

Along with lack of new, specific ideas, participants suggested PD was often not relevant to early literacy in a memorable way. Participant G, “I can’t remember anything that was literacy specific in preservice. I mean, obviously, if we did do something, I don’t know or remember you know, stick in my mind.” Participant K echoed that: “I really don’t know the names of the PD’s because they were not beneficial.”

Finally, participants reported that PD they are offered often does not focus on prekindergarten but has to be adapted by the teacher-user from PD focused on older children. Participant F, “many times, there is no PD for ages two through five. So I literally pretty much have to take bits and pieces of what is being presented at the school and make if fit Pre-K.” Participant J said much the same thing, that teachers have to: “take bits and pieces of what is being presented and make it Pre-K level.” Participant F reported of literacy PD: “those PD sessions are geared towards grades K through five.” Participant C said they wished for PD: “for the appropriate age group that you’re teaching.” Participant H stated relating to prekindergarten PD, we need something: “specific curriculum for us (pre-K) to follow and materials for us to use in the classroom.

We would prefer more training or professional development on probably with teaching pre-K and the younger children."

Discrepant Cases

Throughout data collection and analysis process I looked for discrepant cases that did not fit or data that could have an influence on the findings (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The participant statements were all similar in nature. Therefore, there were no discrepant cases identified because there were no data that failed to fit into emerging patterns (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary of Results

As indicated in the results for RQ1, preservice training, as described by the target school district, is training offered to all district teachers before the beginning of each school year to enhance competencies, regardless of teachers' years of service. This preservice training appears to compose the bulk of the training offered to teachers over the entire year. For example, Participant J, "to be honest with you, I don't think that we get much more literacy PD than that in preservice anymore." This provides consistency of experience among my study participants. However, neither this training nor any other training offered during the year appears to have met the needs of the participants for key elements of Knowles's (1984) principles of andragogy, including experience-based learning and problem solving, relevance of information and skills presented, and involvement in the planning of PD in literacy pedagogy. Teachers described a lack of inclusion in PD planning and in teacher representation as PD presenters, a lack of experience-based PD, and a lack of literacy PD relevant to their work with

prekindergarten students. The lack of attention to the principles of andragogy described by participants in this study may reduce the effectiveness of PD in literacy pedagogy and may limit the effectiveness of instruction in literacy at the prekindergarten level.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

During the data collection and analysis process, I used a reflective journal, self-reflection, and critical self-awareness. The reflective journal was used to jot down thoughts, theories, or questions that arose to ensure credibility and sustain reflexivity of my study during the data collection process. In efforts to maintain trustworthiness throughout my study, I was transparent and increased my self-awareness. Interview and notes from each participant were detailed and the audio recordings were of good quality and recorded on both my iPhone and iPad to alleviate any technical issues or missed data After I transcribed the data manually, I played back the recording to ensure the conversation was captured accurately. As a second layer of credibility, participants were emailed a copy of their transcript 48 hours after their interviews so they could check their transcript for accuracy. No participant wanted to make any changes or had concerns relating to the transcriptions. Each step in this process assisted in allowing me to maintain creditability and trustworthiness through the data collection, analysis, and determination of the results of this study.

Transferability

To support transferability, I used a purposeful sampling of participants which can be applied beyond this context. Each participant was qualified to share their experiences

related to prekindergarten perspectives relating to PD in literacy pedagogy. I provided thick descriptions of context-relevant data as reported to me by each participant. Using the data provided, readers can make an informed judgment of transferability to their own contexts, or formulate further research on this subject.

Dependability

Dependability was supported by maintaining consistent processes and procedures during the data collection and analysis process. The interview questions provided were specific and open-ended to reduce the chance of getting off topic and yielding unusable data. The interview questions used in this study were validated by an outside expert for clarity, and member review was also applied to provide participant validation of raw data, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The research design and rationale, methodology, procedures for recruitment, and the data collection process were consistent and aligned with the research purpose. Additionally, field notes and a reflective journal were used to jot down any personal views or questions I had during the data collection and analysis process.

Confirmability

I took pains to ensure my biases and my perceived and unperceived prejudices did not influence the integrity of this study. I used a reflective journal and note taking to prevent interference from my personal opinions throughout this study, as suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2016). Additionally, procedures were outlined and documented for the steps used to check, re-check, and conduct a final review of the data from each participant transcript through the process of creating codes, formulating categories, and

identifying themes based on the data. How the data were collected, transcribed, and analyzed form a transparent report for readers of my research process.

Summary

In this study, teachers described their involvement in planning PD offered in literacy pedagogy as an important component, but one that is absent in the PD they have taken in literacy pedagogy. Participants indicated that neither attention to problem solving nor experienced-based learning were part of their experience with PD offered in literacy pedagogy. In addition, teachers in this study found little relevance to literacy pedagogy for prekindergarten teachers in the PD they are offered, but indicated PD is redundant, not focused on literacy skill development, and is targeted to teachers of higher grades, not prekindergarten. In sum, teachers indicated that the principles of andragogy are lacking in PD offered in literacy pedagogy. In Chapter 4, I provided a summary of the study findings related to the setting, demographics, data collection and analysis of my data, results associated with each research question, and evidence of trustworthiness. In Chapter 5, I present a summation of key findings, interpretations of findings, any limitations, recommendations, and implications for further research and having a positive change as a result of research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy. To gain an understanding of why state scores in the target school district were below those of other students across the United States in literacy achievement, I explored teacher perspectives of district PD in literacy pedagogy. In answering the three RQs of this study, I identified three themes: elements of effective PD, teacher PD needs, and challenges with PD. Each theme was based on the experiences described by each participant. Key findings suggested prekindergarten teachers desire to have a voice in the planning of PD sessions, there is an absence of experience-based learning and problem-solving in literacy pedagogy instruction for prekindergarten teachers, and prekindergarten teachers do not believe PD sessions are relevant to issues faced in the classroom in support of literacy instruction to young learners.

Interpretations of Findings

Although 3-day PD sessions are provided by the target school district at the beginning of the school year, teacher experiences of events described in this study suggested these methods are ineffective in assisting with issues in the classroom. In this study, I found prekindergarten teachers desire to have a voice in the planning of PD sessions, that there is an absence of experience-based learning and problem-solving in literacy pedagogy PD for prekindergarten teachers, and that prekindergarten teachers do not believe PD sessions are relevant to issues faced in the classroom in support of literacy instruction to young learners. In the next sections, I interpret these three findings.

Teacher Desire to Have a Voice

Based on accounts of participants in this study, PD sessions do not provide opportunities for prekindergarten teachers to assist in planning or have a voice in provided ongoing learning opportunities. Participants' responses suggested prekindergarten teachers desired an opportunity to help in the planning phase of some PD sessions. Allowing teachers to have a role in their education is in line with the study by Luft et al. (2016), which suggested PD could be beneficial to both teachers and students when educators have opportunities to work collaboratively. Widjaja et al. (2017) also suggested educators should be active agents in mastering topics that are relevant to them when planning PD sessions for ongoing learning. According to Louws et al. (2017), it is essential to allow prekindergarten teachers to have an active part and voice in ongoing learning and time to reflect on experiences. However, this appears to be missing in PD sessions in literacy pedagogy reported by participants in the current study. The finding also aligns with a study by Múñez et al. (2017), which found educators should have an autonomous role or voice in planning PD opportunities to acquire adequate skill, pedagogical knowledge, and relevant ongoing learning to enhance teacher knowledge.

Many of the teachers in the current study also want an opportunity to incorporate feedback from other educators through sharing sessions, surveys, roundtable discussions, and collaboration with their peers regarding prekindergarten literacy pedagogy. Engaging in this type of feedback allows educators to gain understanding and content knowledge into the subject matter, according to Depaepe and König (2018). Prekindergarten teachers in the current study also would like PD sessions delivered by peer educators instead of by

administrators or outside experts. Mohan et al. (2017) suggested PD should center around educator needs. Participants in the current study stated PD delivered by other teachers is more meaningful because other educators know and understand the issues faced in the classroom and can share their knowledge. Results in this study confirm prior literature supporting the need for teachers to have an active voice in PD, in the planning of PD, in opportunities to share information among themselves, and in a presenter role in delivery of PD to their peers.

Absence of Experience-Based Learning and Problem Solving

Teachers in the current study described their level of experience-based learning and problem-solving in literacy pedagogy as insufficient or absent during PD sessions provided by the district. Teachers described PD sessions as generic and based on the same strategies or the same content presented in previous years. According to Melhuish et al. (2016), educators may lack essential skills and information because PD for prekindergarten teachers does not offer content-specific knowledge or application of problem-solving skills. Teachers in the current study reported being in sessions that appeared to offer the same strategies presented in previous years, and none reported receiving PD that included experience-based learning. According to Hagen and Park (2016), adult learners need instruction that deals with practical problems, develops their knowledge, and improves their skills and competency. Knowles (1973) stated that experienced-based learning is an essential element of adult learning theory because it embeds information into unique experiences and enhances learners' application of new knowledge and skills.

Most participants in the current study reported PD sessions typically are conducted lecture style, with no hands-on application or real-world problem-solving. These participants reported many of the provided PD sessions required participants to sit and listen to a presenter; one participant noted in the 6 years they participated in PD sessions, all PD had been delivered lecture style. Naliaka-Mukhale and Hong (2017) suggested PD must include practical learning applications, courses relevant to teachers, and hands-on experiences to ensure PD sessions are relevant to teachers in carrying out their daily duties. Many participants in the current study stated they rarely or never participated in experience-based learning and problem-solving PD in literacy pedagogy. Their experience was counter to principles of andragogy described by Knowles et al. (2005), who suggested PD models should create in participants a readiness to learn and provide experience-based learning, relevant content, and a focus on problem-solving. Additionally, Machynska et al. (2020) advocated PD that utilizes relevant experiences and practical knowledge, and focuses on finding a solution to specific problems, suggesting this is accomplished best through specialized on-the-job training or peer training groups, coaching, and interactions with colleagues in professional learning communities. Machynska et al. (2020) indicated that highly relevant training that includes practical application of concepts allows educators to deepen their theoretical knowledge while improving practical skills. Participants in the current study indicated that they are provided with lecture-based PD largely disconnected from teachers' everyday experiences.

Relevance of PD in Literacy Pedagogy

Participants reported needing PD that provides learning tools and skills such as literacy-based PD to support students, and that the relevance of information and skills presented in PD offered in literacy pedagogy is inadequate. However, participants also reported that PD sessions usually are geared toward educators in grades K-2nd. grade, not toward prekindergarten teachers. Prekindergarten teachers described having to modify content to provide developmentally appropriate instruction in literacy. These findings are supported by Hamre et al. (2017) who stated PD offered to public prekindergarten teachers often does not support educators in enhancing students' academic growth. Rivalland et al. (2019) found PD sessions are sometimes ineffective because presenters attempt a one-size-fits-all model that overlooks key issues for individual segments of the audience.

Teachers in the current study stated they desired PD specific to literacy skills because they are expected to teach the subject. However, prekindergarten teachers stated they have not been provided much PD in literacy pedagogy. Additionally, educators stated many of the PD sessions did not meet their needs when implementing literacy pedagogy instruction for young children. Pedagogical and content knowledge are tools for teaching and are needed to enhance educators' abilities to understand the complexity and diversity of how children learn, according to Mu et al. (2018). Maskit and Firstater (2016) asserted that to improve teacher quality, educators must gain knowledge of pedagogical practices such as those supported by PD. Labone and Long (2016) suggested

that PD sessions should be based on a system that connects new and existing knowledge of educators to ensure the relevance of what is presented to real-world contexts.

Kurniah et al. (2019) suggested that experience-based, learner-centered, content-focused PD that aligns with andragogical practice could assist teachers in delivering instruction to students. However, despite prekindergarten children's low achievement in literacy in the target district, teachers stated they do not feel they have the adequate knowledge and skill to effectively teach literacy to young children, and they are not offered enough relevant and effective PD on literacy pedagogy. Williford et al. (2017) described PD in pedagogical content as necessary to increase teacher subject matter knowledge, advance understanding of structured instruction, support students, and enhance classroom management skills. Participants in the current study indicated the PD they are provided falls short of this ideal.

Results of this study indicated prekindergarten teachers feel a need to discuss how PD is planned and delivered for them. Allowing prekindergarten teachers to have a voice in the planning and facilitating of PD sessions appears to be needed by educators and supports Knowles's adult learning theory model. In addition, PD as described by teachers in this study appears to be irrelevant to their needs in guiding literacy for prekindergarten children, but is rather focused on what teachers described as a one-size-fits-all approach that lumps early educators with teachers of older students. Teachers in this study also decried the emphasis on lecture-based PD, which they found uninspiring and difficult to apply to real-life contexts. Teachers wished for experience-based training and training that included small group discussions and problem-solving. Supporting prekindergarten

teachers' autonomy as learners by following principles of andragogy could support engaged and relevant instruction for children in the critical area of literacy pedagogy. When teachers teach as they were taught, to be vessels of knowledge with appropriate training through pedagogical ongoing learning methods (Hamilton, 1995), educators are tools of the system, and it is time to provide teachers with PD that exemplifies best practices.

Limitations of the Study

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted via telephone; therefore, I could not observe the body language of participants to add to the data collected. However, all verbal notations were recorded, such as loud sighs and long pauses by participants. There was one instance in which a participant could not hear me due to inadequate cell service in the home. To alleviate the issue, the participant provided a home phone number, and I immediately called the telephone number with no further disruptions. In addition, because interviews were conducted by telephone, I was unable to notice or respond to participants' facial expressions or body language (and they to mine), which may have limited the extent of the data and my ability to establish rapport with each participant. At the same time, the ability of teachers to participate in the study by telephone from their chosen location without the need to travel to an interview site or to present themselves visually in what they considered an acceptable professional appearance or setting may have encouraged participation in some teachers who would otherwise have declined my invitation. There were no other instances that affected the results of this study.

Recommendations

One recommendation for further research is that my study be replicated to include a larger sample size and to include public prekindergarten teachers from other school districts in the target area. Replicating this study with a larger sample size and other school districts would add depth to my findings and would help determine whether the problems noted in my study are experienced by other teachers elsewhere. Another recommendation for further research is to conduct a study that includes the perspectives of school leaders or administrators regarding PD and the value these individuals ascribe to it. Participants in the current study mentioned they believed school leaders do not understand how teachers' experiences of PD affects its usefulness in supporting literacy pedagogy. A study addressing their perspectives could provide insight into the subject and assist both parties in understanding the difficulties related to attempting to meet the individual needs of many people at one time.

Other recommendations include further research to gain an understanding into a teacher-led experienced-based PD model for prekindergarten and grade school educators. The experienced-based PD model could include integrating practical, real-world experiences led by educators in ongoing learning sessions. Participants in the current study mentioned they wanted to gain experience-based knowledge and skill but that PD that incorporates that is not currently offered by the target school district. The last suggestion for further research is to gain an understanding into the one-size-fits-all model that flattens pedagogical distinctions between grades in PD described by this study's participants. Additional research could address the way school leaders and administrators

provide and engage in PD sessions with teachers and could increase literacy readiness for children about to enter kindergarten.

Implications

One implication for practice that derives from this study is improvement in the planning process for prekindergarten PD sessions to better target teachers' needs. During this study, participants stated if school leaders and administrators allowed them to have an active role in the planning of PD, teachers could shape the PD to fit the problems they face in everyday literacy instruction. Teachers in this study reported that they do not feel supported by PD currently provided and suggested that the first step to building support is to engage teachers in a serious conversation about PD and to ask them about their wants and needs to improve classroom instruction. Prekindergarten teachers also need more PD sessions that provide resources geared toward their grade level, a problem that would be solved by engaging teachers in planning for PD.

Another implication for future practice is offering teacher-led PD sessions. The results showed prekindergarten teachers desired to have their peers lead training instead of administrators or outside experts because teachers learn more from educators who understand the issues teachers face in the classroom. Prekindergarten teachers reported not having many opportunities to collaborate with peers. Collaborating with peers and working on problem-solving strategies will allow teachers to take an active role in their ongoing education.

Finally, school leaders and administrators should provide PD that is specific to prekindergarten teachers and their students. Participants stated school leaders and

administrators must modify current strategies because PD is geared toward other grade levels. In addition, PD should be targeted to the curriculum and should not simply repeat old ideas that may no longer be relevant. Participants stated they have been working from a new curriculum but have not been provided sufficient training on how to use the curriculum to its full potential. Finally, school leaders and administrators should provide PD sessions that are interactive and engaging to educators. Participants stated many of the PD sessions provided are conducted in lecture style and are not as memorable or helpful as PD that allows them to get up and move, make and take materials, or act out scenarios. Application of adult learning theory would enhance PD for all teachers.

This study has the potential to inspire positive social change if educators engage in a serious conversation to explore the needs and wants related to sufficient PD opportunities for prekindergarten teachers in literacy pedagogy. Gaining an understanding of what teachers need could lead to PD sessions that are satisfying and relevant to prekindergarten teachers while producing useful and sustainable guidance that could increase student achievement. Positive social change may result when school leaders and administrators delegate planning of PD sessions to teachers and encourage grade-relevant experienced-based PD that addresses instructional problems. These actions could start a conversation about the purpose and effectiveness of PD sessions offered in literacy content and pedagogy. Positive change in PD instruction could have a positive effect in increasing students' knowledge and literacy achievement.

Conclusion

In this study, I explored public prekindergarten teacher perspectives of district-sponsored PD in literacy pedagogy. The data showed that teachers want to actively participate in their learning and develop PD in literacy pedagogy that addresses the problems they encounter and that is relevant to the grade level they teach. Offering PD opportunities that support teachers' self-directed learning and align with personal goals will allow prekindergarten teachers to have accountability related to their professional learning and could lead to more effective literacy pedagogy.

Allowing prekindergarten teachers to engaged in self-directed learning aligns with Knowles (1984), principles of andragogy or adult learning theory. Professional development is designed to create a positive atmosphere for learning while supporting teacher self-concepts, be relevant to their life experiences, and expand educator knowledge and practice (Knowles, 1984). The results of this study show there is still work that must be done regarding PD opportunities for prekindergarten teachers, particularly in the critical area of literacy pedagogy. This study could start the conversation between prekindergarten teachers and school leaders and administrators regarding dynamic and useful PD. Working together to provide the knowledge and skill teachers need to implement literacy pedagogy to prekindergarten students, teachers and administrators could increase literacy achievement for children far beyond the early years of education.

References

Abdul-Majied, S., Johnson, C., & Campbell, J. (2017). Professional development and early childhood teachers' performance: A view through an undergraduate foundation course. *Caribbean Teaching Scholar, 7*, 47-65. https://journals.sta.uwi.edu/ojs/index.php/cts/article/download/6352/6080

Baker, M. (2018). Early childhood teachers at the center: A qualitative case study of professional development in an urban district. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *46*(2), 231–240. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-017-0858-6

Barnett, W. S., Jung, K., Friedman-Krauss, A., Frede, E. C., Nores, M., Hustedt, J. T., Howes, C., & Daniel-Echols, M. (2018). State prekindergarten effects on early learning at kindergarten entry: An analysis of eight state programs. *AERA Open*, *4*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858418766291

Bates, C. C., & Morgan, D. N. (2018). Seven elements of effective professional development. *Reading Teacher*, *5*, 623. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1674

Beard, C. B. (2017). Connecting spiritual formation and adult learning theory: An examination of common principles. *Christian Education Journal*, *14*(2), 247-269. https://doi.org/10.1177/073989131701400202

Blackley, S., & Sheffield, R. (2015). Digital andragogy: A richer blend of initial teacher education in the 21st century. *Issues in Educational Research*, *25*(4), 397–414. http://www.iier.org.au/iier25/blackley-2.pdf

Boylan, M., & Demack, S. (2018). Innovation, evaluation design and typologies of professional learning. *Educational Research*, *60*(3), 336-356. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2018.1493352

Brinkmann, S., & Kvale, S. (2018). *Doing interviews*. SAGE Publications.

Brockett, R. G., & Hiemstra, R. (2019). *Self-direction in adult learning*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429457319

Brunsek, A., Perlman, M., McMullen, E., Falenchuk, O., Fletcher, B., Nocita, G., Kamkar, N., & Shah, P. S. (2020). A meta-analysis and systematic review of the associations between professional development of early childhood educators and children's outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *53*, 217-248. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2020.03.003

Carpenter, J. P., & Linton, J. N. (2016). Edcamp unconferences: Educators' perspectives on an untraditional professional learning experience. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *57*, 97-108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.03.004

Carter, N., Bryant-Lukosius, D., DiCenso, A., Blythe, J., & Neville, J. A. (2014). The use of triangulation in qualitative research. *Oncology Nursing Forum*, *41*(5), 545-547. https://doi.org/10.1188/14.ONF.545-547

Chacko, T. (2018). Emerging pedagogies for effective adult learning: From andragogy to heutagogy. *Archives of Medicine and Health Sciences*, *6*(2), 278-283. https://doi.org/10.4103/amhs.amhs_141_18

Chang, D. F., Chen, S. N., & Chou, W. C. (2017). Investigating the major effect of principal's change leadership on school teachers' professional development. *IAFOR Journal of Education*, *5*(3). https://doi.org/10.22492/ije.5.3.07

Charungkaittikul, S., & Henschke, J. A. (2018). Creating a global sustainable lifelong learning society: An andragogical approach. *Journal of International and Global Studies*, *9*(2), 76-94. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJAVET.2017100104

Chiariello, E. (2018). What matters in literacy education: Emerging priorities for 2018. *Literacy Today*, 22-28. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5584cf97e4b0d79e05de3050/t/5b01b2800e2e7216afc3d583/1526837901445/What%27s+Hot+2018+FINAL.pdf

Christianakis, M. (2018). Introduction: Language and literacy pedagogy and practice. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *45*(1). https://www.jstor.org/stable/90018180

Creswell, J. W. (2016). *30 essential skills for the qualitative researcher*. SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative & mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (4th ed.). SAGE.

Culkin, D. T. (2018). Teaching qualitative inquiry: Experiential andragogy in military faculty development programs. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *66*(3), 176-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/07377363.2018.1525516

Cunningham, A. E., Etter, K., Platas, L., Wheeler, S., & Campbell, K. (2015) Professional development in emergent literacy: A design experiment of teacher study groups. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *31*62-77. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2014.12.002

Dempsey, L., Dowling, M., Larkin, P., Murphy, K. (2016) Sensitive interviewing in qualitative research. *Research in Nursing & Health, 39*, 480-490. https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21743

Depaepe, F., & König, J. (2018). General pedagogical knowledge, self-efficacy and instructional practice: Disentangling their relationship in pre-service teacher education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *69*, 177-190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.10.003

De Nisco, A. (2015). Prioritizing principal pd. *District Administration*, *51*(10), 36-40. https://districtadministration.com/prioritizing-principal-pd/

Dharamshi, P. (2018). "Seeing the everyday through new lenses": Pedagogies and practices of literacy teacher educators with a critical stance. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 45*(1), 7-29. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1167866.pdf

DiLoreto, M., & Gaines, T. (2016). An investigation of discrepancies between qualitative and quantitative findings in survey research. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 15*(12), 145-154. https://s3.amazonaws.com/academia.edu.documents/55203279/Vol_15_No_12_-_November_2016.pdf

Duncan, G. J., Magnuson, K., & Murnane, R. J. (2016). Reforming preschools and schools. *Academic pediatrics*, *16*(3), S121-S127. https://www.academicpedsjnl.net/article/S1876-2859(15)00376-9/pdf

Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2018). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *17*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406918788176

Eadie, P., Stark, H., & Niklas, F. (2019). Quality of interactions by early childhood educators following a language-specific professional learning program. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *47*(3), 251-263. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-019-00929-5

Egert, F., Fukkink, R. G., & Eckhardt, A. G. (2018). Impact of in-service professional development programs for early childhood teachers on quality ratings and child outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 88*(3), 401-433. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654317751918

Elm, A., & Nordqvist, I. (2019). The research circle - A tool for preschool teachers' professional learning and preschool development. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, *42*(5), 621-633. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2019.1652899

Ende, F. (2016). *Professional development that sticks: How do I create meaningful learning experiences for educators.* ASCD.

Epp, T. (2017). Getting smarter about teacher PD: How rigorous professional development can close learning gaps. *District Administration, 12*.

https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Getting+smarter+about+teacher+PD%3a+How+rigorous+professional...-a0519574031

Erickson, J. D. (2018). Maintaining developmentally appropriate literacy practices in standardized classrooms: A Freirean framed review of the literature. *Early Child Development & Care*, *188*(3), 296. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1213727

Feltsan, I. (2017). Development of adult education in Europe and in the context of Knowles′ study. *Comparative Professional Pedagogy*, *7*(2), 69-75. https://doi.org/10.1515/rpp-2017-0025

Fonsén, E., & Ukkonen-Mikkola, T. (2019). Early childhood education teachers' professional development towards pedagogical leadership. *Educational Research*, *61*(2), 181-196. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131881.2019.1600377

Gaikhorst, L., Beishuizen, J. J. J., Zijlstra, B. J. H., & Volman, M. L. L. (2017). The sustainability of a teacher professional development programme for beginning urban teachers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *47*(1), 135-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2015.1125449

Garbarski, D., Schaeffer, N. C., & Dykema, J. (2016). Interviewing practices, conversational practices, and rapport. *Sociological Methodology*, *46*(1), 1-38. https://doi.org/10.1177/0081175016637890

Gettinger, M., & Stoiber, C. K. (2016) Coaching and demonstration of evidence-based book-reading practices: Effects on Head Start teachers' literacy-related behaviors and classroom environment. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher*

Education, *37*(2), 117-141. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2016.1168329

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine Transaction. http://www.sxf.uevora.pt/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Glaser_1967.pdf

Glover, T. A., Nugent, G. C., Chumney, F. L., Ihlo, T., Shapiro, E. S., Guard, K., Koziol, N., & Bovaird, J. (2016). Investigating rural teachers' professional development, instructional knowledge, and classroom practice. *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, *31*(3). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1101917.pdf

Gomez, R. E., Kagan, S. L., & Fox, E. A. (2015). Professional development of the early childhood education teaching workforce in the United States: An overview. *Professional Development in Education*, *41*(2), 169-186. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.986820

Goodrich, J. M., & Lonigan, C. J. (2017). Language-independent and language-specific aspects of early literacy: An evaluation of the common underlying proficiency model. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *109*(6), 782-793. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000179

Hagen, M., & Park, S. (2016). We knew it all along! Using cognitive science to explain how andragogy works. *European Journal of Training and Development*, *40*(3), 171-190. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-10-2015-0081

Hamilton, M. L. (1995). Confronting self: Passion and promise in the act of teaching or my Oz-dacious journey to Kansas! *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *22*(3), 29-42. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23475831

Hamre, B., Partee, A., & Mulcahy, C. (2017). Enhancing the impact of professional development in the context of preschool expansion. *AERA Open, 3*(4), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858417733686

Heppner, D. H. (2016). 'Then what happened?' Studying emergent literacy in the narrative play of preschool children. *Language & Education: An International Journal, 30*(5), 459-477. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1141933

Hindman, A. H., & Wasik, B. A. (2017). Is dosage important? Examining Head Start preschoolers' language and literacy learning after one versus two years of ExCELL. *Early Child Development and Care, 187*(3), 342-357. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2016.1236256

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Jacobs, J., Burns, R. W., & Yendol-Hoppey, D. (2015). The inequitable influence that varying accountability contexts in the United States have on teacher professional development. *Professional Development in Education, 41*(5), 849-872. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.994657

Kamisli, H., & Ozonur, M. (2017). The effects of training - based on Knowles' adult education principles - on participants. *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics Science and Technology Education, 13*(12), 8405-8414. https://doi.org/10.12973/ejmste/80801

Khalil, M. K., & Elkhider, I. A. (2016). Applying learning theories and instructional design models for effective instruction. *Advances in Physiology Education*, *40*(2), 147-156. https://doi.org/10.1152/advan.00138.2015

King, F. (2016). Teacher professional development to support teacher professional learning: Systemic factors from Irish case studies. *Teacher Development*, *20*(4), 574-594. https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2016.1161661

Klenke, K., Martin, S., & Wallace, R. (2016). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership* (2nd ed.). https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Knowles, M. S. (1973). *The modern practice of adult education*. Association Press.

Knowles, M. S. (1978). *The adult learner: A neglected species*. Gulf Publishing Co.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy in action.* Cambridge Adult Education. https://doi.org/10: 0695814729

Knowles, M. S. (1984). *Andragogy in action.* Jossey-Bass. ISBN: 9780875896212

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2015). *The adult learner. The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Knowles, M. S., Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. F. (2005). *The adult learner* (6th ed). Routledge.

Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: Towards professional development 3.0. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice, 23*(4), 387-405. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1211523

Kosnik, C., Miyata, C., Menna, L., & Dharamshi, P. (2017). So how do you teach literacy

in teacher education?: Literacy/English teacher educators' goals and pedagogies. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy*, *40*(1), 59-71. www.researchgate.net/publication/320102065_So

Kurniah, N., Andreswari, D., & Kusumah, R. G. T. (2019). Achievement of development on early childhood based on National Education Standard. In proceedings of the International Conference on Educational Sciences and Teacher Profession (ICETeP 2018). *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, (295)*, 351-354. https://doi.org/10.2991/icetep-18.2019.82

Labone, E., & Long, J. (2016). Features of effective professional learning: A case study of the implementation of a system-based professional learning model. *Professional Development in Education*, *42*(1), 54-77. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.948689

Leavy, P. (2014). *The Oxford handbook of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.

Levy, R. (2016). A historical reflection on literacy, gender and opportunity: Implications for the teaching of literacy in early childhood education. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, *24*(3), 279-293. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2016.1165652

Liao, H., & Hitchcock, J. (2018). Reported credibility techniques in higher education evaluation studies that use qualitative methods: A research synthesis. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, *68*, 157-165. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2018.03.005

Lin, Y.C., & Magnuson, K. A. (2018). Classroom quality and children's academic skills

in child care centers: Understanding the role of teacher qualifications. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *42*, 215-227. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2017.10.003

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE.

Linder, S. M., Rembert, K., Simpson, A., & Ramey, M. D. (2016) A mixed-methods investigation of early childhood professional development for providers and recipients in the United States. *Professional Development in Education, 42*(1), 123-149. https://doi.org/v10.1080/19415257.2014.978483

Little, T. D. (Ed.). (2013). *Oxford handbook of quantitative methods, volume 1 : Foundations*. Oxford University Press.

Louws, M. L., van Veen, K., Meirink, J. A., & van Driel, J. A. (2017). Teachers' professional learning goals in relation to teaching experience. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(4), 487-504. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2017.1342241

Luft, J. A., Bang, E., & Hewson, P. W. (2016). Help yourself, help your students. *Science Teacher*, *83*(1), 49-53. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Julie_Luft/publication/289518577_Help_Yourself_Help_Your_Students/links/568daa7c08aeaa1481ae7b6b.pdf

Lynch, J. (2017). Short-term professional learning that focuses on beliefs and practice: Improvements in preschool teachers' ongoing literacy practice. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *38*(2), 164-181. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2017.1315351

Machynska, N., Derkach, Y., & Pankevych, Y. (2020). Types and forms of professional development of a preschool teacher in in-service training. *Неперервна Професійна Освіта: Теорія Та Практика*, *2*, 72-77. https://doi.org/10.28925/1609-8595.2020.2.10

Malterud, K., Siersma, V. D., & Guassora, A. D. (2016). Sample size in qualitative interview studies: Guided by information power. *Qualitative Health Research*, *26*(13), 1753-1760. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732315617444

Mangin, M. M., & Dunsmore, K. (2015). How the framing of instructional coaching as a lever for systemic or individual reform influences the enactment of coaching. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *51*(2), 179-213. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X14522814

Mangope, B., & Mukhopadhyay, S. (2015). Preparing teachers for inclusive education in Botswana: The role of professional development. *Journal of International Special Needs Education*, *18*(2), 60. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Sourav_Mukhopadhyay/publication/282774571_Preparing_Teachers_for_Inclusive_Education_in_Botswana_The_Role_of_Professional_Development/links/562d09f308ae22b17034be4c.pdf

Mantei, J., & Kervin, L. (2018). Examining literacy demands for children during teacher-led episodes of reading aloud across the transition from preschool to kindergarten. *Australian Journal of Language & Literacy*, *41*(2), 82-93. https://www.alea.edu.au/documents/item/1850

Margolis, J., Durbin, R., & Doring, A. (2017). The missing link in teacher professional

development: Student presence. *Professional Development in Education, 43*(1), 23-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2016.1146995

Markussen-Brown, J., Juhl, C. B., Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., Bleses, D., & Hojen, A. (2017). The effects of language- and literacy-focused professional development on early educators and children: A best-evidence meta-analysis. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 38,* 97-115. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.07.002

Maskit, D., & Firstater, E. (2016). Preschool teachers' perspectives on teaching as a profession and pedagogical change. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, *30*(2), 200-210. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2016.1143417

Melhuish, E., Howard, S. J., Siraj, I., Neilsen-Hewett, C., Kingston, D., de Rosnay, M., Duursma, E., & Luu, B. (2016). Fostering effective early learning (FEEL) through a professional development programme for early childhood educators to improve professional practice and child outcomes in the year before formal schooling: Study protocol for a cluster randomised controlled trial. *Trials, 17*(1), 602. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13063-016-1742-1

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Mitton-Kükner, J., & Murray Orr, A. (2018). A multi-year study of pre-service teachers' literacy practices in the content areas: Time epistemologies and indicators of stasis and growth. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 13*(1), 19-35. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2017.1376670

Mohan, P. P., Lingam, G. I., & Chand, D. D. (2017). A comparative study of rural and

urban teachers' perspectives of professional development. *Waikato Journal of Education (2382-0373)*, *22*(4), 79-87. https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v22i4.352

Mu, G. M., Liang, W., Lu, L., & Huang, D. (2018). Building pedagogical content knowledge within professional learning communities: An approach to counteracting regional education inequality. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *73*, 24-34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.03.006

Múñez, D., Bautista, A., Khiu, E., Keh, J-S., & Bull, R. (2017). Preschool teachers' engagement in professional development: Frequency, perceived usefulness, and relationship with self-efficacy beliefs. *Psychology, Society & Education*, *9*(2), 181. https://doi.org/10.25115/psye.v9i2.655

Naliaka-Mukhale, P., & Hong, Z. (2017). Towards improvement of student learning outcomes: An assessment of the professional development needs of lecturers at Kenyan Universities. *Journal of Education and Practice*, *8*(12), 151-158. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1140619.pdf

Namaziandost, E., Sabzevari, A., & Rasooyar, H. (2018). Andragogically oriented teaching method versus pedagogically oriented teaching method to improve general English achievement: A comparative study. *International Journal of English Language and Translation Studies*, *6*(2), 81-89. http://www.eltsjournal.org/archive/value6%20issue2/10-6-2-18.pdf

Nasser, I., Kidd, J. K., Burns, M. S., & Campbell, T. (2015). Head Start classroom teachers' and assistant teachers' perspectives of professional development using a LEARN framework. *Professional Development in Education*, *41*(2), 344-365.

https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2013.833538

National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP]. (2017). *Data tools district profiles*. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Dept. of Education. https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/districtprofile?chort=1&sub=RED&sj=XQ&sfj=NL&st=MN&year=2017R3

National Research Council. (2015). *Transforming the workforce for children birth through age 8: A unifying foundation*. National Academies Press. https://www.nap.edu/resource/19401/BirthtoEight_brief.pdf

Neal, J. W., Neal, Z. P., VanDyke, E., & Kornbluh, M. (2015). Expediting the analysis of qualitative data in evaluation: A procedure for the rapid identification of themes from audio recordings (RITA). *American Journal of Evaluation*, *36*(1), 118-132. https://doi.org/:10.1177/1098214014536601

Nguyen, T., Jenkins, J. M., & Whitaker, A. A. (2018). Are content-specific curricula differentially effective in Head Start or state prekindergarten classrooms? *AERA Open*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858418784283

Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research. *Evidence Based Nursing*, *18*(2), 34-35. https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2015-102054

Norling, M., Sandberg, A., & Almqvist, L. (2015). Engagement and emergent literacy practices in Swedish preschools. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *23*(5), 619-634. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2014.996423

Novitasari, D., & Sugito, S. (2018). Improving the skill of early childhood education teachers in making lesson plans through an andragogy-based training. *Journal of Nonformal Education, 4*(1), 97-106. https://doi.org/10.15294/jne.v4i1.13578

Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 695-705. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/ortlipp.pdf

Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and methods*: *Integrating theory and practice* (4th ed). Sage publications.

Patton, K., & Parker, M. (2017). Teacher education communities of practice: More than a culture of collaboration. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 67*, 351-360. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.06.013

Pavlova, I. V., & Sanger, P. A. (2016). Applying andragogy to promote active learning in adult education in Russia. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy*, *6*(4), 41-44. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v6i4.6079

Phillips, D., Austin, L. J., & Whitebrook, M. (2016). The early care and education workforce. *The Future of Children, 26*(2), 139-158. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1118553.pdf

Piasta, S. B., Farley, K. S., Mauck, S. A., Soto Ramirez, P., Schachter, R. E., O'Connell, A. A., Justice, L. M., Spear, C. F., & Weber-Mayrer, M. (2020). At-scale, state-sponsored language and literacy professional development: Impacts on early childhood classroom practices and children's outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *112*(2), 329-343. https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000380

Ping, C., Schellings, G., & Beijaard, D. (2018). Teacher educators' professional learning: A literature review. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 75*, 93-104. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.0

Piper, B., Zuilkowski, S. S., Dubeck, M., Jepkemei, E., & King, S. J. (2018). Identifying the essential ingredients to literacy and numeracy improvement: Teacher professional development and coaching, student textbooks, and structured teachers' guides. *World Development*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2018.01.018

Ravitch, S. M., & Carl, N. M. (2016). *Qualitative research: Bridging the conceptual, theoretical, and methodological*. SAGE.

Reddy, L. A., Dudek, C. M., & Lekwa, A. (2017). Classroom strategies coaching model: Integration of formative assessment and instructional coaching. *Theory into Practice*, *56*(1), 46-55. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2016.1241944

Rezzonico, S., Hipfner-Boucher, K., Milburn, T., Pelletier, J., Girolametto, L., Weitzman, E., & Greenberg, J. (2015). Improving preschool educators' interactive shared book reading: effects of coaching in professional development. *American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, *24*(4), 717-732. https://doi.org/10.1044/2015_AJSLP-14-0188

Rivalland, C., Armstrong, L. C., & Monk, H. (2019). Constructing positions of support: Acknowledging workplace discourses in the midst of early childhood reform. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, *27*(1), 100-119. https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2018.1556537

Rollnick, M. (2017). Learning about semiconductors for teaching: The role played by content knowledge in pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) development. *Research in Science Education*, *47*(4), 833-868. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9530-1

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed). Sage.

Sato, T., Haegele, J. A., & Foot, R. (2017). Developing online graduate coursework in adapted physical education utilizing andragogy theory. *Quest (00336297)*, *69*(4), 453-466. https://doi.org/1080/00336297.2017.1284679

Scarparolo, G. E., & Hammond, L. S. (2018). The effect of a professional development model on early childhood educators' direct teaching of beginning reading. *Professional Development in Education*, *44*(4), 492-506. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2017.1372303

Schachter, R. E. (2015). An analytic study of the professional development research in early childhood education. *Early Education & Development*, *26*(8), 1057-1085. https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2015.1009335

Schachter, R. E., Spear, C. F., Piasta, S. B., Justice, L. M., & Logan, J. A. R. (2016). Early childhood educators' knowledge, beliefs, education, experiences, and children's language- and literacy-learning opportunities: What is the connection? *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *36*, 281-294. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecresq.2016.01.008

Seyoum, Y., & Basha, G. (2017). Andragogical methods to sustain quality adult education in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Instruction*, *10*(3), 47-62.

https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2017.1034a

Shannon, D., Snyder, P., & McLaughlin, T. (2015). Preschool teachers' insights about web-based self-coaching versus on-site expert coaching. *Professional Development in Education*, *41*(2), 290-309. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.986819

Sheridan, S., & Gjems, L. (2017). Preschool as an arena for developing teacher knowledge concerning children's language learning. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *45*(3), 347-357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0756-8

Smith, D. W. (2018). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Stanford University. https://plato.stanford.edu/cgibin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=phenomenology

Snell, E. K., Hindman, A. H., & Wasik, B. A. (2015). How can book reading close the word gap? Five key practices from research. *Reading Teacher*, *68*(7), 560-571. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1347

Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M. L., McLean, M., Sandall, S., McLaughlin, T., & Algina, J. (2018). Effects of professional development on preschool teachers' use of embedded instruction practices. *Exceptional Children*, *84*(2), 213-232. https://doi.org/10.1177/0014402917735512

Taylor, S. J., Bogdan, R., & DeVault, M. L. (2016). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource*. Wiley.

Terrell, P. P., & Watson, M. (2018). Laying a firm foundation: Embedding evidence-based emergent literacy practices into early intervention and preschool environments. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, *49*(4), 148-164.

https://doi.org/10.1044/2017_LSHSS-17-0053

Van Waes, S., Moolenaar, N. M., Daly, A. J., Heldens, H. H. P. F., Donche, V., Van Petegem, P., & Van den Bossche, P. (2016). The networked instructor: The quality of networks in different stages of professional development. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *59*, 295-308. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.022

Vujicic, L., & Camber Tambolaš, A. (2017). Professional development of preschool teachers and changing the culture of the institution of early education. *Early Child Development and Care*, *187*(10), 1583-1595. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2017.1317763

Weber-Mayrer, M. M., Piasta, S. B., & Yeager Pelatti, C. (2015). State-sponsored professional development for early childhood educators: Who participates and associated implications for future offerings. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *36*(1), 44-60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2014.996927

Whalen, S. P., Horsley, H. L., Parkinson, K. K., & Pacchiano, D. (2016). A development evaluation study of a professional development initiative to strengthen organizational conditions in early education settings. *Journal of Applied Research on Children*, *7*(2). https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1188424.pdf

Whitworth, B. & Chiu, J. (2015). Professional development and teacher change: The missing leadership link. *Journal of Science Teacher Education*, *26*(2), 121-137. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10972-014-9411-2

Whorrall, J., & Cabell, S. (2016). Supporting children's oral language development in the preschool classroom. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *44*(4), 335-341.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-015-0719-0

Widjaja, W., Vale, C., Groves, S., & Doig, B. (2017). Teachers' professional growth through engagement with lesson study. *Journal of Mathematics Teacher Education*, *20*(4), 357-383. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10857-015-9341-8

Williford, A. P., Carter, L. M., Maier, M. F., Hamre, B. K., Cash, A., Pianta, R. C., & Downer, J. T. (2017). Teacher engagement in core components of an effective, early childhood professional development course: Links to changes in teacher-child interactions. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, *38*(1), 102-118. https://doi.org/10.1080/10901027.2016.1269028

Willig, C., & Rogers, S.W. (2017). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*. SAGE.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Zareie, M. H., Nasr, A. R., Mirshahjafari, S. E., & Liaghatdar, M. J. (2016). Elaborating the purpose and content of professional development plan for preschool teachers. *Educational Research and Reviews*, *11*(16), 1463-1472. https://doi.org/10.5897/ERR2016.2852

Zein, S. (2016). Factors affecting the professional development of elementary English teachers. *Professional Development in Education*, *42*(3), 423-440. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2015.1005243

Zhang, C., Diamond, K. E., & Powell, D. R. (2015). Examining the content of head start teachers' literacy instruction within two activity contexts during large-group

circle time. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 29*(3), 323-337. https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2015.1042124

Zide, L., & Mokhele, M. L. (2018). Enlisting on teacher professional development: Reflections of teachers' experiences. *E-BANGI Journal, 15*(4), 36-47. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0225/c05724a89901e75df14e6851826c3eb4477b.pdf

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Thank you for agreeing to talk with me today. This conversation will take 45 to 60 minutes; is that still okay with you? I hope you are sitting in a location that is quiet and private, so we can talk without being disturbed or overheard. Are you okay with the space you are in? Can you hear me clearly? I am going to record our conversation, so I can be certain of having your exact words, and not need to stop while I try to write down your exact words. Is it okay that I record this?

Let me tell you a bit about myself. I've worked for the state for six years, as a program evaluator. So, I get to think about what makes childcare programs work well, for children and for their teachers. Tell me a bit about your work…

Today, I want to talk mostly about professional development, what some people call "PD." I'm particularly interested in PD that helps you in teaching early literacy skills to young children, the things you need to know to do that effectively and also the techniques used to teach literacy skills so children learn them. Does that make sense?

Okay, so…

1. What aspects of *planning* of PD in the area of literacy the teaching of literacy skills would enhance your knowledge and instruction? What aspects of the currently offered PD sessions are meeting your needs in the planning for that PD?
2. In what ways could teachers be involved in planning PD in the area of literacy teaching, that might make that PD more effective for you?

3. Tell me more about the PD you've experienced in literacy teaching. How much of that PD included hands-on learning, in which teachers do things instead of just listen to the presenter?
4. What PD you have participated in included how to solve the problems you might encounter in teaching literacy skills to children?
5. What PD you have received in literacy teaching is utilized in your everyday practice as a teacher? Please give some examples of applying what you learned?
6. What PD you received in literacy teaching helped you become a better, more skillful teacher? Please give some examples of how your skills increased.
7. If you were planning PD in literacy teaching for the next school year, what would you want to see included? What do you think should not be included that has been included in the past?

Thank you so much for talking with me. What else do you think I should know about your PD experiences before we wrap up?

I will create a transcript from our conversation today and I'll send that to you by email, so you can look it over and make sure I've got things right. You can also change things then, if you think of things later you wish you'd said today. So, watch for that email. Thanks again.