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International Teachers' Perceptions of Mandated Curriculum and Instructional Practices

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MA, Wake Forest University, 2009

BEd University of the West Indies, 2000

Teaching Diploma, Mico Teachers College, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

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Abstract

International teachers who arrive in the United States from developing countries often experience challenges adjusting to the U.S. classroom environment. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers at a rural school district in the southern United States on the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The conceptual framework for the study was self-determination theory which indicates that when individuals have autonomy, relatedness, and competence, they will perform at their highest level of proficiency. The research questions were developed to gather qualitative data on teachers' perceptions of the challenges that they face with adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices, and their suggestions for improving the adjustment experience of international teachers. Semi structured interviews were used to collect data for this basic qualitative study from 15 international middle and high school teachers hired through three recruiting agencies from developing countries who taught a tested subject or a world language. The interview transcripts were analyzed using first-cycle open coding and second-cycle axial coding to find patterns, categories, and themes. The findings revealed that teachers faced challenges with understanding curriculum and implementing unfamiliar instructional practices, lack of autonomy, classroom management issues, and lack of support. The study has implications for research on international teachers, mandated curriculum, classroom management, and cultural responsiveness. The potential for positive social change exists in the areas of improved instruction for international teachers, mentoring, and professional development.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my children, Loxanne, Robert, and Da-Jean. The love of my children has helped me through the most difficult circumstances. They think that I am an academic hero, and I strive to set the example as a lifelong learner. Without their support and inspiration, I would not have accomplished this major milestone. I owe this accomplishment to them.

Acknowledgments

I want to acknowledge my children, parents, family, friends, and mentors, who keep supporting me through the difficulties of my life. I must single out my son Da-Jean, who had to learn how to play solo and accept less quality time than a 9-year-old deserves while I worked on my dissertation.

Thanks to my friends who cheered me on when I was attempting to do the impossible as an ambitious single mom doing two degrees at a time, doubling up courses to qualify for certification as a school administrator. I make special mention of Yandean Bhoorasingh, Patricia Brown, Jane Fisher, Marleen Golding, and Theodene Grey-Davis, whose nonjudgmental support was what I needed to overcome my hurdles.

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Thank you all.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The southern United States (U.S.) started experiencing a shortage of teachers in most subject areas in or around 1992 (Serbes, 2017). One possible explanation for the high teacher attrition rate was the introduction of a mandated curriculum as a measure of accountability that specified the need for highly qualified teachers (Valdez, 2020). Although President Barack Obama replaced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation with Every Student Succeeds (ESSA) waiver in 2015, U.S. born teachers continued to leave the classrooms in southern states for various reasons year after year (Miller, 2019; Self & Dulaney, 2018). Even though the new federal law shifted the focus of educational accountability from test scores to student growth, the teacher attrition rate remained high (Self & Dulaney, 2018). Many school districts are still required to use the same standards that were published in 2015 in their instruction despite the shift to ESSA, and standardized tests are still based on the standards of 2015 (South Carolina Department of Education, 2021).

In an apparent effort to provide classrooms with the highly qualified professionals that were required by the NCLB regime, many southern states, including South Carolina, embarked on recruiting teachers from international locations such as Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, India, and The Philippines. The international teachers who are employed in the South Carolina school system are recruited by agencies approved by the South Carolina Department of Education (Caulder, 2017; Self, 2018; South Carolina Department of Education, 2021). Dunn (2015) and Self and Dulaney (2018) noted that bringing in teachers from abroad was done in response to the fear that the country was

running out of teachers. In 2002, South Carolina school leaders sought the help of recruiting agencies to help fill teaching vacancies (Aoki, 2002). Since then, the agencies with no-objection status approved by the South Carolina Department of Education have consistently supplied school districts with highly qualified teachers from developing countries (Self, 2018). In 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education approved the hiring of 822 highly qualified international teachers, enlisted by three recruiting agencies, namely Visiting International Faculty (now known as Participate), Foreign Academic Cultural Exchange Services (FACES), and Educational Partners International [EPI]; Self & Dulaney, 2018).

During the process from recruitment to employment, the international teachers faced numerous setbacks, including recruiting agencies exploiting them and diminishing their quality of life (Mabe, 2020). While the perceptions of American-born teachers may have been documented and researched, the voices of international teachers, especially from developing countries, are not evident to a comparable degree in the existing literature.

This study was necessary to understand how international middle and high school teachers from developing countries namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, Venezuela, India, and The Philippines perceive the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence their classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. In this chapter, I outline the background of the problem based on evidence from the local level and show the alignment among the research problem, purpose, and conceptual framework. In

addition, Chapter 1 includes the research questions, nature of the study, assumptions, delimitations, limitations, and the definition of key concepts in the research problem. The chapter ends with the significance of the problem and a summary of the main points in the chapter.

Background

International teachers from developing countries are coming to the U.S. from an autonomy-supportive environment (Brown, et al., 2020; Kinkead-Clarke, 2018)) and must meet expectations in an education system that is governed by mandated curriculum and instructional practices (Banda, 2018; Nagro et al., 2018; Valdez, 2020). International teachers have the challenge of learning to interact and build connections with stakeholders while adjusting to their new location. In addition to culture shock, these teachers must handle "logistics in their personal lives such as setting up a bank account, finding housing, and accessing healthcare" (Spegman, 2017, p. 3). Teachers from developing countries experienced culture shock not only in their personal lives, but also in adjusting to the students, curriculum, and entire experience of the American classroom (Banda, 2018). The concept of "genuine ignorance" (Banda, 2018, p.3) reflects how many international teachers from developing countries are perceived by their American colleagues, who may have difficulty appreciating the quality of experience and learning that scholars and practitioners from other countries can contribute to the American education system (Banda, 2018).

In a critique of the implications of mandated curriculum practices, Knight (2019) described the phenomenon of "irresponsible accountability" wherein teachers are

expected to blindly follow the mandates of a curriculum without adding their individual touch. Larson and Bradshaw (2017) concluded from a survey that teachers want the freedom to decide on textbooks, instructional techniques, and grading practices, even if this occurs within limits (Erss, 2018). Additionally, Adebayo (2018) stated that in developing curriculum and choosing textbooks in Mexico, China, and the Caribbean, "the ultimate aim of curriculum development should be emotional and spiritual maturity of students and academic excellence" (p. 3). Many international teachers in the Caribbean are known to appreciate having autonomy over their classroom practices and believe that autonomy serves as a motivation to remain in the classroom and the profession (Kinkead-Clark, 2018). Mulcahy (2018) highlighted that mandated curriculum challenges teacher-autonomy by presenting a conflict between teacher choice and accountability.

Several researchers (Brown et al., 2020; Little et al., 2019; Nagro et al., 2018) have studied the classroom management styles of foreign teachers and provided evidence that classroom management expectations are somewhat different in the U.S. than what occurs in developing countries. While U.S. teachers are more prone to follow the mandated discipline plan as set out by the school (hard strategies), foreign teachers may rely on soft strategies such as proximity, counseling, and cajoling (Brown et al., 2019). When met with discipline challenges in the U.S. classroom, international teachers have stated that they felt like aliens, while the children have stated that their teachers appeared to be from another world because of the difficulties that they had building relationships and gaining respect from their American students (Cross et al., 2011; Dunn, 2016). Researchers have concluded that international teachers knew what constitutes an effective

classroom environment, but felt that adopting a caring attitude and using affective

practices such as proximity and one-on-one counseling with their students did not work

as effectively as mandated discipline strategies because the students were not accustomed

to the approach. A study of foreign language teachers from South America in the U.S. by

Debreli and Ishanova (2019) validated the concept that international teachers preferred to

use affective classroom management strategies such as body language and proximity. The

researchers concluded that the soft classroom management approach was ineffective in

the U.S. classroom because failure of the foreign teachers to follow through with

punishment and consequences often resulted in disruptive behavior from students who

were used to more structured discipline practices (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019).

Classroom management success while practicing in the U.S. is based on building

relationships (Tomlinson, 2019). Teachers must learn to adapt their instructional practices

and classroom management styles to align with culturally responsive pedagogy (Ahmed,

2019). The confrontation between the American culture and the culture of education in

many developing countries often compounds the problem of building meaningful

relationships with students (Mabe, 2020). International teachers need adequate

preparation to adjust to their new students and teaching expectations. The teachers need

training in global competency (Carter, 2020; Shehi, 2017) because classroom

management problems are often caused by difficulties with adjusting to an unfamiliar

system that uses a mandated curriculum (Nagro et al., 2018).

The gap in practice for this study was a scarcity of scientific research studies that

address the challenges that international teachers from developing countries face in host

countries. Literature that addresses mandated curriculum and instructional practices is more or less limited to the American-born teachers and researchers in the field, and often does not include scientific research from the perspective of the international teachers from developing countries. A search of the existing literature did not show evidence of a significant scope of research that analyzed the influence of the challenges that international teachers from developing countries faced in partnerships with international host countries. Hauerwas and Creamer attested that "what is known about hosts' perspectives and outcomes regarding these international teaching partnerships is sparse" (p. 160). The discussion about adjusting to the challenges of mandated curriculum includes only a small number of contributions by researchers such as Banda (2018), Brown et al. (2018), Hauerwas and Creamer (2018), and Kinkead-Clark (2018). In examining the effects of partnerships between developing countries and international teachers, researchers noted that "little is known about the impact of such partnerships on the host community and how to establish effective reciprocal practices that achieve positive benefits for all" (Hauerwas & Creamer, 2018; p. 157). Poole (2020) confirmed the need to stop stereotyping the experiences of international school teachers, or "ascribing their experiences to a typology" (p. 1), noting the importance of appreciating international teachers' lived experiences as valuable scientific data. Examining the experiences of teachers practicing abroad is a new area of research (Sahling & DeCarvalho, 2021). Research is needed to add the perceptions of international teachers from developing countries on challenges with adjusting to mandated curriculum to the body of literature.

Problem Statement

The problem that this study addressed was international teachers from developing countries, namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, Venezuela, India, and The Philippines, at the local site for the study face challenges with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence their classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The School Improvement Plan for 2017- 2019 revealed that the international teachers from developing countries were among the teachers with the lowest averages in English 1, biology, math, and U.S. history at one high school in this study for 3 consecutive years. The principal of that school expressed concern about meeting the needs of international teachers to help them improve student achievement in the tested courses. The school improvement committee identified providing culturally relevant professional development to help international teachers with instruction for improved student achievement as one of the goals for improvement. No one asked for the international teachers' input.

When the assistant principal in charge of testing released the standardized test scores data for the district at the opening meeting for the 2019-2020 school year in a data meeting handout, the international faculty were among the teachers with the lowest test scores in core subject areas at both the middle and high school levels. One high school international teacher commented that the "cookie-cutter" lesson plan format that her school was using was a part of the problem. The English teacher expressed that it was unfair to hold her accountable for student achievement without giving her freedom to choose how she taught her classes. An international middle school math teacher said that

the way that school leadership wanted him to teach did not feel natural, and he did not feel that it was authentic teaching.

Through this study, I sought to investigate international middle and high school teachers' perceptions on the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The problem is significant because international teachers are often hired to teach core subjects that have a state standardized test component. The teaching vacancies are usually in high needs, low-performing schools with high teacher turnover rates (Hauerwas & Creamer, 2018; Kombe, 2017). Kombe (2017) questioned the assumptions of transferability and concluded that international teachers may have difficulty because their teaching expertise may not be directly portable across cultures. Bense (2016) posited that although there is a heightened interest in research regarding issues related to international teacher mobility and migration, there is hardly any literature to substantiate claims.

Not addressing the problem has implications for effective classroom management and instruction for student achievement, which are factors that could snowball into districts' eligibility for various types of funding, school report card ratings, school enrollment, and teacher recruitment and retention (Baker, 2018). If the challenges faced by international teachers remain unaddressed, international teachers from developing countries may continue to experience difficulties with instruction, classroom management, and student achievement (Brown et al., 2019; Debreli & Ishanova, 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a large school district in a southern state, on the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement.

The research study explored the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries, namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, India, Venezuela, and The Philippines, who were recruited by EPI, FACES, and Participate, and taught English language arts (ELA), math, social studies, biology, or a world language.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study surrounded the problem statement. The questions explored the perceptions of the international middle and high school teachers at the local site regarding the challenges that they faced with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The answers to RQ1 provided thick, organic descriptions of the lived experiences of the international teachers with adjusting to mandated curriculum (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). In formulating RQ2, I sought to uncover whether international teachers at the rural school district in a southern state perceived the implications of the mandated curriculum on their classroom management proficiency.

RQ3 revealed the perceptions of the international teachers concerning what they need to make the adjustment process less challenging.

RQ1: - What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in a rural school district in the southern United States regarding the challenges when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the United States?

RQ2: - What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in the southern United States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on effective instructional delivery and classroom management practices?

RQ3: - What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less challenging?

Conceptual Framework

Self-determination theory (SDT), first developed by Deci and Ryan (2017), posits that humans are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically with the drive to grow and improve themselves based on certain factors. When individuals can fulfill the needs of autonomy, competence, and psychological affiliation or relatedness, they will perform at their best (Carr, 2020; Wingrove et al., 2020). The psychological needs within SDT are universal and valuable to all peoples and cultures (Deci & Ryan, 2017). One of the strands of the SDT is the cognitive-evaluation theory strand, which was the focus of this research study. Cognitive evaluation theory posits the concept of allowing individuals to

practice autonomy, relatedness, and competence to intrinsically motivate them (Carr, 2020; Sheldon & Prentice, 2017).

SDT was an appropriate theory for this research because it involves gathering qualitative evidence about perceptions. The theory emphasizes a human-centered approach based on teacher choice and conflict with a set of mandates (Myers, 2019). SDT highlights the positive effects of autonomy, relatedness, and competence on an individual's sense of self-worth, as intrinsic motivation for quality performance (Wingrove et al., 2020).

The logical connections between SDT and my study was that international middle and high school teachers come to South Carolina from an autonomy-supportive classroom environment where they had reasonable control over their classroom practices (Kinkead-Clark, 2018). There could likely be a disconnect or disparity between what international teachers were used to in their home countries and the expectations of South Carolina school leaders. Many international teachers were highly qualified, experienced, and celebrated teachers in their home countries (Banda, 2018). If the teachers can feel the level of confidence that they did in their home countries, the school districts may benefit from higher levels of student achievement, more effective teachers, and more satisfied administrators (Erss, 2018; Grobler et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2019).

The qualitative approach was a suitable connection to the framework and the problem statement because the research was not about numbers. Self-determination is not a quantitative measure. I intended to create a description of data derived from semi

structured interviews that allowed participants to interpret and define the world and their experiences in a unique way (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used the basic qualitative design. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to understand the meanings that participants attribute to their lived experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I used qualitative design in conjunction with Ryan and Ryan's SDT to explore the perceptions of the international middle and high school teachers about making the shift between educational systems. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted that qualitative researchers are interested in how participants interpret their experiences, construct their realities, and create their meanings. The qualitative approach is a suitable connection to the framework and the problem because one cannot measure self-determination with numbers. I used the data derived from organic narratives to provide thick descriptions of the participants' unique interpretations of the world (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Hall (2021) indicated that education reform movements advocating for teacher input in decision making will motivate teachers to experience job satisfaction on the tenets of the SDT.

The location for the study was a school district in rural South Carolina that employs international teachers on a J1 visa who are recruited by EPI, FACES, or Participate Learning to teach middle and high school. The teachers for the study were from developing countries, namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, Venezuela, India, and The Philippines.

The qualitative approach helped in providing non-numerical data about the teachers by exploring how international middle and high school teachers interpret their experiences while adjusting to the challenges of the mandated curriculum. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) asserted the value of qualitative research as simply seeking to understand an experience or phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon to be understood was how the international middle and high school teachers perceived their adjustment to the mandated curriculum. I used a personal face-face interview with semi structured open-ended questions to explore the teachers' perceptions and report the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The 15 participants for this study shared their experiences freely without considerations for predetermined scales, checklists, or any other types of instruments (Creswell & Creswell, 2016). I used first cycle and axial coding to analyze the data for categories, patterns, and themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I drew conclusions about the teachers' experiences with the challenges they faced adjusting to the mandated curriculum, based on the trends revealed in the data from the interview transcripts. The teachers were interviewed on a virtual platform or telephone conversation using semi structured open-ended interview questions. I chose interviews because I believed that this was the best data collection approach to get unfiltered, unbiased, and detailed descriptions from the teachers about their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2016).

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the term *international teachers* referred to the teachers from developing countries namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya,

Venezuela, India, and the Philippines (Banda, 2018; Brown et al., 2019; Kinkead-Clark, 2018).

A *mandated curriculum* referred to a strict set of state standards, district requirements, and school expectations that involve textbooks, teaching materials, content, assessment instruments, and instructional programs. Teachers use the required resources in preparing students for district benchmark assessments and state standardized tests (Erss, 2018; Myers, 2019).

Instructional practices are the policies and instructional mandates at the district or school level, such as pacing guides, curriculum maps, and lesson plan formats. Schools often adopt or purchase software and instructional programs that teachers are required to use (Day, 2019; Myers, 2019).

Classroom management consists of the variety of skills and techniques that a teacher accesses to create an orderly, systematic, and work-focused environment that makes it easy for students to be attentive and remain on task (Marzano et al., 2003; Özen & Remzi, 2020).

Diverse learning environment refers to a learning environment with students with different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, cultural backgrounds, religious affiliations, and languages disabilities, socioeconomic status, and sexual identities (Ozturgut, 2017; Petts, 2020).

Assumptions

Qualitative research is carried out based on specific assumptions about the conditions under which data are collected to yield reliable and valid results (Wargo,

2015). Leedy and Omrod (2010) stated that assumptions are basic components of a study that make the problem realistic and worth studying. For this study, the teachers were required to understand the concept of a mandated curriculum and how it influenced their instruction. I assumed that the teachers would answer questions honestly and objectively about their experiences adjusting to teaching in America and how it may be different from what they were accustomed to in their home countries. I also assumed that the teachers would take a sincere interest in my research study to help me get valid results that would be useful in helping to understand their challenges. The assumptions were necessary because I wanted the data to be meaningful, authentic, valid, and useful in drawing conclusions about the teachers' experiences and to prompt further research that could help with finding solutions.

Scope and Delimitations

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of the middle and high school international teachers from developing countries at a rural school district in South Carolina on the challenges they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. I chose this topic to understand the perceptions, attitudes, challenges, and suggestions that international teachers from developing countries have regarding the American education system with a specific focus on mandated curriculum. Other challenges with adjustment not addressed include testing practices, certification issues, and issues relating to family dynamics and immigration

status. I also chose not to include the induction and evaluation process that is used to issue contracts each year.

I delimited the study to include international teachers from developing countries as participants instead of American-born teachers or international teachers from Europe and Asia because a researcher is more likely to find research on any topic with American, Asian, or European teachers as participants than teachers from developing countries. I wanted the research from my study to be used as a comparison of the influence of mandated curriculum on teachers from diverse backgrounds. The cohort of participants was delimited to middle and high school, rather than elementary school teachers. This selection was made mainly because of the convenience, location, and accessibility of the site where the teachers were employed.

Additionally, middle and high school teachers directly influence student achievement because they get students ready for a state standardized test. The time restraint may be a factor that contributes to the challenges that they face with the adjustment. The decision to include only one school, instead of all three in the district, was based on the similarity in demographics of international teachers in each school. The sample may be saturated because if I had added more international teachers to the sample, they would probably have had the same experiences, if they were from the same geographical area (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The data collection instrument was delimited to face-to-face or virtual interviews because the research topic was about the perceptions of teachers. Interviewing with open-ended questions left room for the teachers to interpret the problem and add their meaning

to the phenomenon of study. SDT (Ryan & Ryan, 2019) facilitated the data collection method by making it compatible with the purpose of the research, which was to find out the teachers' perceptions about their challenges.

The perceptions of international teachers at the study site may summarize the perceptions of international teachers throughout the district and possibly South Carolina or even the U.S. because there is an adjustment process for every teacher who enters the U.S. The results of the study may be transferable to any context that includes international teachers, challenges with mandated curriculum, or factors influencing student achievement and classroom management.

Limitations

The limitations of any study are the weaknesses that a researcher cannot control (Leedy & Omrod, 2010). Using purposive sampling created a limitation because the results only reflected the perceptions of the teachers who met the criteria outlined for the study. However, each school in the district has similar demographics of international teachers who are usually dispersed to different schools in the district from the same pool of teachers. Teachers in the school district are usually from the same developing countries namely Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, India, Venezuela, and the Philippines. The school district has over 3,000 staff members, and the percentage of international teachers is about 15 -18%. The voice of the international middle and high school teachers is necessary to reveal what makes them feel valued (Jacobi, 2018).

I also faced the challenge of a limitation in the availability and accessibility of articles for my literature review. Because the phenomenon of interest in this study has not

been extensively researched, there is a scarcity of articles on international teachers from developing countries (Bense, 2016; Sahling & DeCarvalho, 2021) I met with a librarian from Walden University to search articles and found a scarcity in the literature about international teachers from developing countries. To address the limitation, I included articles from the university libraries of developing countries. I have also included government reports, information from the South Carolina Department of Education website, the recruiting agencies' official websites, and school district documents and publications to substantiate claims.

A limitation also existed regarding the logical fallacies that may arise when processing qualitative data. A fallacy is an unsubstantiated statement that has no research data to support it. The Walden Writing Center (n. d) states that the use of logical fallacies to process data is usually done unintentionally and unwittingly for various reasons. Because the literature on the experiences of international teachers from developing countries has not been extensively researched, there is the likelihood of making unfounded assumptions and hasty generalizations. To address this limitation, I provided ample evidence for all the information presented in the research study.

Choosing to use a basic qualitative study created a potential limitation for this study. A basic qualitative study relies on non-numerical data such as interview transcripts, observations, document reviews, and narrative descriptions (Babbie, 2016). The validity and reliability of the data depend on the skillfulness of the researcher to design questions and the intellectual capacity and honesty of the interviewee to correctly interpret the questions and provide meaningful answers that will lead the researcher to

derive valid conclusions. The limitation was addressed by carefully crafting questions that were not ambiguous to get direct answers. I also aimed to be perceptive, objective, genuine, and sincere in my interviews to create a comfortable atmosphere for the interview process. At the same time, I conducted research to gain knowledge on effective questioning techniques to make sure that I could probe responses to get further details and information to clarify the respondents' answers. I also planned to interview in a neutral setting such as a library or public restaurant. Because of the Covid-19 safety precautions provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), I scheduled virtual interviews outside of school hours to remove the discomfort that might come with speaking honestly inside the school building.

Qualitative research requires a researcher to pay attention to subjectivity and reflexivity. Burkholder et al. (2016) defined subjectivity as the researcher's unique perspective that poses a challenge with reliability. Ravitch and Carl (2016) defined reflexivity as a systematic assessment of the researcher's identity, positionality, and subjectivity. An assessment of my identity and experiences revealed two biases that may have influenced this study. First, I am an international teacher alumna who is now a permanent resident of the U.S. I first arrived in the U.S. as a high school English teacher from a developing country in 2006 and had significant challenges with the differences between teaching in my home country and teaching in America to influence student success. I found the adjustment process to be challenging, disappointing, frustrating, and discouraging, but I persevered. After the first 2 years, I started making significant

progress with classroom management and I earned an award for my contribution to student success.

After leaving that school, I went back to my home country for a year to the same school at which I was employed before. I had to re-adjust to making my own decisions and operating with autonomy. My student achievement that year was still a100% pass rate, as it had been before I left for the U.S. I returned to the U.S. after 1 year to teach in a middle school, and again, I had to re-adjust my teaching style to fit the demands of the mandated curriculum in preparing students for the state exam. The pass rate that year was increased by about 15% to about a 58% pass rate. My experiences switching between systems and seeing the disparity in student achievement may have led to the passion behind the choice of topic and the research problem.

The administrators at the school where I work consult with me when international teachers from developing countries, especially Jamaica, are struggling with classroom management and ineffective instruction. Additionally, have earned my credentials and am now a certified school principal. I may have a different view of the adjustment process now that I have16 years of experience in the American system. I addressed this bias by being mindful of my role as a researcher, not a participant observer, or an administrator, and remembering that the research was not about my experiences, but about those of my participants. In analyzing the data, I based all my conclusions on the responses of the participants and did not interject my own opinions or emotions during the interviews or the reporting of findings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

Significance

Several stakeholders stand to benefit from the data that have been generated from this study. The district leaders who plan PD workshops, as well as school leaders, may benefit because the international teachers' voices will be added to the dialogue when designing instructional PDs. Getting teachers' input provides data on the specific tools and skills that international teachers need to effectively deliver instruction and manage their U.S. classrooms. If the teachers are more prepared and equipped to deliver instruction, they may experience greater levels of student achievement and gain greater job satisfaction, which may positively influence international teacher retention rates (Ryan & Ryan, 2019).

Additionally, the data can inform the way that the local school district plans for the new teachers' induction process for international teachers, and may help with providing PD that is culturally relevant to benefit both teachers and students. Because international teachers make up a significant portion of the teaching force in South Carolina school districts, they may benefit most by having their voices heard and becoming intrinsically motivated (Carr, 2020) to infuse their teaching styles into their instructional delivery. Based on the theory of self-determination, if the information gathered from the study is treated as valuable research data, the international teachers are likely to feel more confident and competent (Tomlinson, 2019). The international teachers may be better able to take ownership of their classrooms to plan, instruct, and manage in a way that they think will best fit the needs of their students (Day, 2019; Ryan & Ryan, 2019).

The implications for social change include making the educational pedagogy and paradigm in South Carolina more inclusive of diverse ideas and perspectives to build human and intellectual capacity (Phillips, 2014). Hearing the views of international teachers may validate the training and expertise of foreign professionals as education experts (Participate, 2021) and allow them to fulfill the role of capable cultural ambassadors (EPI, 2021). Understanding what international teachers need to do their job effectively may improve the quality of instruction and lead to increased student achievement (Moss, 2018; Roth, 2014)

Additionally, the study is likely to benefit the international teachers by bringing the attention of the leadership of the study site and district to the difficulties that the teachers face with adjusting to the new teaching environment. District and school leadership may make assumptions about the adjustment process without having any hard evidence to substantiate their claims. The study will shed light on authentic lived experiences of the teachers and supply data that can help with the planning for PD to be more differentiated to accommodate the specific needs of the teachers. When the needs of teachers are met, they are likely to be more motivated to do their best, resulting in greater student achievement (Carr, 2020).

Summary

Chapter 1 focused on the background to the study by supplying information about teacher shortages that created the space for international teachers to be brought to the U.S. The chapter outlined the problem, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, limitations, scope, and delimitations, and limitations. In the next chapter, I

will provide a comprehensive review of literature that covers the variables in the problem

statement.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The problem for this research study was that international teachers from developing countries face challenges with adjusting to mandated curriculum that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement (Özen & Remzi, 2020). The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries on the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. For the purposes of this study, the term *international middle and high school teachers* referred to teachers from developing countries such as Columbia, Jamaica, Cameroon, Kenya, Venezuela, India, and The Philippines, who were recruited by FACES, EPI, and Participate Learning recruiting agencies.

A comprehensive search of related literature revealed that international teachers in America are a new area of research. There is a scarcity of scientific peer-reviewed articles on the lived experiences of international teachers from developing countries in American databases. The emerging theme that was evident from the search of literature is that although international teachers may be highly qualified and experienced, but they need mentoring and PD training to address personal and professional culture shock.

Although mandated curriculum presents a challenge for all teachers, veteran teachers are more comfortable bucking or negotiating the script to meet the needs of learners (Day, 2019; Erss, 2018). Teacher autonomy has been featured heavily in articles about mandated curriculum as a counter to the demands placed on teachers. Several

researchers have agreed that the conflict with mandated curriculum is a face-off between autonomy and accountability (Poole, 2020). Studies have revealed that the benefits of autonomy included practicing authentic teaching, facilitating learner-centered approaches, differentiating to meet the needs of diverse learners, and building teacher self-efficacy (Day, 2019; Myers, 2019; Parish, 2019).

The review of literature has been organized under major headings as suggested by Lambert (2012) to make the content interesting and easy to read. In Part 1, I examined the concept of international teachers in America regarding their experiences, challenges, and needs. In Part 2, I examined the literature on the need for mentoring and PD training in classroom management and instruction for all new teachers. In Part 3, reviewed the discourse on the relationship between mandated curriculum and autonomy.

Literature Search Strategy

To lay a foundation for understanding the experiences of international middle and high school teachers in connection with mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement, I conducted a pervasive search, seeking relevant literature using a number of strategies. I accessed electronic sources published within the last 5 years through professional university and college libraries, Google Scholar, ProQuest, ERIC, and EBSCO Host to deepen my search. I searched the variables individually and jointly in the databases mentioned. The variables and combinations were *international teacher*, *professional development for international teachers*, *foreign teacher*, *mentorship*, *mentorship for foreign international teachers*, *mandated curriculum*, *mandated*

curriculum and autonomy, *influence of autonomy on student achievement*, *classroom management*, *diversity and inclusion*, and *culturally responsive pedagogy*. I used ERIC, EBSCOHOST, ProQuest, and Google Scholar for all searches of the terms listed above. My search for information on the experiences of international teachers from developing countries yielded few articles. I scheduled a conference with a Walden University librarian to help me find articles on international teachers. There were few articles within the 5-year time frame, so I used The University of the West Indies Alma Jordan Library to complement my search on international teachers' experiences. I searched under the key words *autonomy in the Caribbean*, *classroom management strategies in developing countries*, and *international teachers, and classroom management practices in Africa* in published dissertations within the last 5 years because my topic was a new phenomenon that newer doctoral candidates might have explored. Using dissertations published in the last 5 years also helped to establish the direction that informed my study topic and helped to confirm the gap in practice.

The iterative process involved shifting topics around to see what relationships existed among the data and conclusions from the articles. Evaluating articles for relevance, comparison, coherence, and contrast changed the structure of my paper several times. I had to keep changing the way in which I organized the information to create a fluent paper that showed the connections between one heading and the next.

Conceptual Framework

SDT, first developed by Deci and Ryan (2019), posits that humans are motivated both intrinsically and extrinsically, and that individuals have the drive to grow and

improve themselves based on certain factors. According to Mulcahy (2018), when individuals can fulfill the needs of autonomy, competence, and psychological affiliation or relatedness, they will perform at their best. The psychological needs posited within SDT are universal and valuable to all peoples and cultures. Jones (2014) categorized SDT into two strands: cognitive evaluation theory and organismic integration theory. This study focused on the cognitive strand only. The cognitive-evaluation theory strand echoes the concept of allowing individuals the capacity to practice autonomy, relatedness, and competence as motivation to perform at their best.

The logical connection between the framework presented and my study is that international teachers come to South Carolina from an autonomy-supportive, classroom environment where they had some control over their classroom practices (Cross et al., 2011; Kinkead-Clark, 2018; Kissau, 2014). SDT was an appropriate theory for this research because it involved gathering qualitative evidence from teachers in a rural school district in a southern state on their lived experiences with adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices. SDT highlights the positive effect of autonomy, relatedness, and competence on an individual's sense of self-worth and on the quality of their performance. According to Tomlinson (2019), when individuals can fulfill the needs of autonomy, psychological affiliation, or relatedness, they will perform at their best.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts

The practice of moving teachers across international boundaries to fill vacancies has become prevalent, serving as confirmatory evidence that teaching is indeed a mobile

profession (Parmigiani, 2018). International teachers have taken a prominent place in the U.S. classroom (Self & Dulaney, 2018). International teachers from developing countries started arriving in the U.S. in the face of an ongoing teacher shortage that began in the early 1970s (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Furuya et al. (2019) reported that 11% of all teachers in the U.S. are foreign- born. Many foreign-born teachers enter the U.S. through a recruitment agency owned and operated by American entrepreneurs who recruit teachers to serve in U.S. classrooms for a maximum period of 5 years on a J-1 Visa (Caulder, 2017; Self & Dulaney, 2018; South Carolina Department of Education, 2021).

In South Carolina, eight recruiting agencies have no objection status (South Carolina Department of Education, 2021). That means that the South Carolina State Department of Education has granted the opportunity for the eight agencies to recruit teachers from developing countries, and grant international teachers the privileges of a J-1 Visa. Of the eight recruiting agencies with no objection status, three focus on recruiting teachers specifically for South Carolina. The three recruiting agencies are Participate Learning, formerly Visiting International Faculty Program (VIF), FACES, and EPI. In 1987, the VIF Program was launched by a family that established the recruitment agency for international faculty (Participate Learning, 2021). The goal was to promote international perspectives by supplying universities with foreign teachers, but the focus shifted to K-12 services in 1989 to assist with teaching world languages (Participate Learning, 2021; Scholl, 2019). The organization is committed to exposing students to intercultural education and helping develop global competence, which is a critical skill in

the 21st century. The company website shares that its vision and commitment lie in uniting the world through global learning for students and teachers (Participate Learning, 2021).

FACES in Columbia, South Carolina, has been operating since 1998, providing the same services as Participate Learning. The major difference between Participate Learning, and FACES is that FACES serves only South Carolina schools (FACES, 2021; Participate Learning, 2021). EPI, a breakaway company from VIF has the same vision of promoting global education through cultural exchange. All three recruiting agencies are authorized by the Department of Education to sponsor K-12 teachers for hire in Virginia, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina (EPI, 2021, FACES, 2021; Participate Learning, 2021).

The South Carolina Department of Education (2021) endorses the teachers hired by recruiting agencies as being highly qualified professionals (Ospina & Medina, 2020) who are "linguistically and culturally rich to better prepare them for future success in their personal, academic, and professional lives" (para.2). Based on the articles reviewed, international teachers in developing countries enjoy autonomy, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Of the researchers studied, Maravillas (2021) differed in his evaluation of the role of autonomy by positing that the presence of autonomy and self-efficacy were part of the professional identity of international teachers. International teachers risk losing their professional identity in the U.S. if they are stereotyped or their needs are assumed (Poole, 2020). The unique identity and experiences of teachers from developing countries

(Furuya et al., 2019) are the reason that their lived experiences must be valued as scientific data (Poole, 2020; Sahling & DeCarvalho, 2021).

Teachers on exchange programs usually migrate with the hope of experiencing a better life in the U.S. and have positive expectations of their experiences (Banda, 2018; Dunn, 2016). Serbes (2017) expounded the possible goals for teachers wanting to teach in America as developing efficiency, effectiveness, communication, and classroom management skills. Despite the fact that these teachers are experienced and well qualified, international teachers from developing countries experience obstacles such as immigration policies, certification problems, furthering their education, and becoming naturalized citizens (Baker, 2020; Caulder, 2017; Cross et al., 2011; Dalal, 2017; Dunn, 2016; Furuya et al., 2019).

In the professional category, such teachers faced challenges relating to culture, language barriers in their communication with native speakers, classroom management, and lack of administrative support (Parmigiani, 2018; Sierra & Lopera, 2020, Serin, 2017; Spegman, 2017). Separation for families has also been indicated as a barrier to international teachers' adjustment in the U.S. (Banda, 2018; Brown et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2018; Ospina & Medina, 2020).

The idea of having teachers trained in a foreign country teaching in a context that is totally new to them raises a concern about the need for culturally relevant, differentiated, and specific training that will prepare the teachers to provide effective instruction for American students (Dalal et al., 2017; 2021; Katradis & Fox, 2017; Sahling & DeCarvalho, 2021). Globalization makes it necessary for teacher training and

PD to take on three dimensions: mobility, intercultural learning, and intercultural

teaching (Parmigiani, 2018). Besides the usual new teacher induction programs, other PD

programs have been specifically applied to training teachers from developing countries to

carry out their teaching duties in the U.S. (Dalal et al., 2017; Katradis & Fox, 2017). PD

programs prepare international teachers to face the unfamiliar experiences that they will

encounter in the U.S. because the demographics and logistics of the job are different from

what the teachers are accustomed to (Banda, 2018; Brown et al., 2020; Cross et al., 2011;

Kinkead-Clark, 2018; Ospina & Medina, 2020; Roth, 2014; Seah, 2017; Spegman, 2017).

The nature of the studies by researchers mentioned above is different in terms of

the sample, and location for the studies. Cross et al., 2011), Spegman (2017), and Roth

(2014) evaluated the experiences of teachers based on the perspectives of superintendents

and principals in the U.S. However, Kinkead-Clark (2018), Seah (2017), Brown et al.

(2020), and Ospina and Medina (2020) conducted studies in the teachers' home countries.

Banda (2018) gave a report from the perspective of a student teacher.

Kinkead-Clark's (2018) study focused on elementary teachers in the Caribbean.

Participants were from different locations in the Caribbean such as Trinidad and Tobago,

Guyana, and Jamaica. The results showed that the teachers identified six factors that

contributed to their job satisfaction. The teachers ranked the factors from least to greatest

influence as follows: (a) a strong home–school partnership, (b) targeted PD (c)

mentorship and support, (d) strong pedagogical practices, (e) appreciation of diversities

in the classroom, and (f) autonomy. The population for Kinkead-Clark's study was

elementary school teachers in the Caribbean. The gaps in that study were that the

countries are included that do not represent the population of international teachers in South Carolina. There is no evidence that the experiences of the elementary teachers would represent the perceptions of middle or high school teachers.

Adjusting to the attitudes of American students and adults provided insight about the lack of understanding of outside cultures. Banda (2018) and Shehi (2017 reflected on the contrast between how they were perceived and treated in their home countries and the experience of mutual culture shock that characterized their reception in the U.S. Banda (2018) was a teacher from Africa who had migrated to the U.S. to further her education in an American university, and Shehi (2017) migrated from Albania as a child and ended up working as an English teacher in South Carolina, and got most of her formal education in the U.S., conducted a study about the attitudes of American students towards foreign -born English teachers. Both the native African teacher and Albanian teachers shared experiences of "genuine ignorance" that they confronted when both colleagues and students assumed that they were from an uncivilized place and did not have knowledge of modern amenities and technology. Banda stated that she experienced initial nervousness about losing her identity during assimilation into U. S. culture, but gradually learned that change means both losing and finding one's identity (p. 493). Shehi and Nagro both shared a similar sentiment by stating that accepting culture must be a mutual transaction.

A longitudinal quantitative study by Seah (2017) addressed whether student achievement was influenced by immigrant teachers when compared to American-born teachers. The sample of eighth grade students was studied over 2-year intervals: 1998 to 1990, 1992, 1994, and 2000. Students provided detailed personal information about

themselves and their families. Achievement data were gathered from standardized curriculum-based achievement tests in science, mathematics, social studies, and English. Results showed that student achievement was not negatively influenced by having an immigrant teacher. The perspectives of both researchers are relevant to the discussion about the differences between educational systems and reiterate the notion that there is an inevitable and challenging adjustment process when teachers migrate to the U.S. (Seah, 2017; Shehi, 2017).

Whereas Seah (2017) focused on eighth-grade students, my study included high school students in a separate location, and the data might not be transferable to that population or location (Lodico et al., 2010). Further, the data collected for Seah's study dated 1988-2000, and may not represent new trends, best practices, or the era of standardized tests under NCLB. Additionally, Seah collected data from students, while the other studies collected data from teachers. Seah used quantitative data that may not allow for the humanistic perspective needed to understand the people behind the numbers (Burkholder et al., 2016). The study raises the question of whether the differences in the two educational systems and the adjustment to mandated curriculum are factors to be considered in comparing student achievement.

Differences between the practice of classroom management in the U.S. and other countries were presented in the research studies that I reviewed. Brown et al. (2019) used a quantitative method to evaluate how 200 secondary school teachers in the capital cities of Jamaica implemented effective classroom management strategies. The purpose of the research study by Brown et al. was to differentiate which classroom management

strategies depended on the teachers' personality or care for students versus which strategies were based on formal disciplinary action. Data was collected by implementing a 45-question survey. The results showed that more teachers practiced hard discipline strategies that were not based on their personality. The level of indiscipline compelled the teachers to use more hard strategies because the decision about which method to use depended on what would work best in the specific situation. Brown et al. also concluded that the teachers from Jamaica are aware of what an effective classroom looks like.

A researcher presented findings on the experiences of international teachers when they arrive in the U.S. Ospina and Medina's (2020) qualitative case study reports the experiences of teachers on visitor exchange programs in the U.S. The teachers came from six countries: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Romania. The foreign educators taught Spanish, French, English as a Second Language (ESL), and Latin in secondary schools. A group of teachers were from Argentina, Australia, Colombia, and Jamaica, and they taught Spanish, French, ESL, and science.

The teachers' responses were summarized under three categories: personal, intercultural and professional matters. Each category was farther sub-divided into challenges and benefits. The benefits included increasing English proficiency, becoming more reflective teachers, learning to adapt to the new country without family, appreciation for diversity, and keeping abreast with new methodologies (Ospina & Medina, 2020). The challenges included language barriers, classroom management, feeling alienated, lack of socialization, not knowing how to conduct parent conferences,

and language barriers. The job-related issues were PD opportunities, reflective teaching, confidence, classroom management, and parent conferences (Ospina & Medina, 2020).

Several of the researchers based their conclusions about the differences between the two educational systems on interactions with international teachers from developing countries as participants (Brown et al., 2020; Kinkead-Clark, 2018). Ospina and Medina (2020), investigated the teachers' experiences in the U.S., while Banda (2018) did reflective research on how her adjustment to the U.S. classroom as a teacher from Africa opened their eyes to the cultural differences. Since the study included teachers from European countries, the sample is not representative of the participants of my study and the data may not be transferable to teachers from developing countries teaching in South Carolina. An additional limitation of the study by Ospina and Medina was that there is no mention of the states in which the teachers were located. Also, the teachers in the study came from similar countries as the participants of this study but there was only a general conclusion about their experiences. It is still not known from the literature what the experience is like teaching specifically in South Carolina for the teachers from developing countries who were recruited by VIF, FACES, and EPI.

Professional Development

A common theme that emerged from my research about bridging the gap between the two educational systems, and to help international teachers from developing countries make the adjustment across cultures is to provide effective PD and training. Global teachers are global learners who could benefit from personal and professional development to meet the needs of diverse learners (Serin, 2017). From studies conducted

by Serbes (2017) international teachers stated that personal empowerment, and PD were among their motivations for deciding to teach in the U.S. Teachers who acquire the ability to understand cultural differences can better relate to their students (Serbes, 2017; Serin, 2017). From the analysis of literature, mentorship, and PD that included cross-cultural training were suggested as solutions to the challenges faced by international teachers from developing countries (Choi et al., 2021; Little et al., 2019; Sierra & Lopera, 2020). As new international teachers could benefit from mentorship (Hutchinson & Jazzar, 2009; Schulleri & Saleh, 2020). Teachers need an orientation to the unfamiliar teaching practices in the U.S. classroom (Dalal et al., 2021; Katradis & Fox, 2017; Sahling & DeCarvalho, 2021) and could benefit from training that included exposure to culturally responsive pedagogy and inclusiveness (Cardona-Multo et al., 2018; Wang, 2019).

Mentorship

Although new teachers are professionals who have gone through job-related training, they do require the support of an experienced teacher to help them adjust to their new classrooms (Shehi, 2017). Several views surfaced from my literature review about mentoring which included why it is necessary, the benefits and the best practices for mentorship. Mentoring has proven to be effective in helping new teachers make sense of their new teaching assignments (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020), by providing a nurturing environment in which new teachers can grow (Hall, 2020). Zaharis (2019) agreed that mentoring does not only help teachers to be successful, but their students as well. Hong's position on mentoring is that strong principal leadership makes mentoring more effective

than weak leadership because weak leadership diminishes the potential benefits of high-quality mentoring (Hong, 2010). Mustin's (2021) contribution to the debate was that new teachers need strong emotional support, acceptance and assurance to face the challenges of their teaching career (p. 2).

Many U.S. schools provide mentorship for their new teachers as a part of their orientation and induction in the first year at any school (Baker, 2020). Several schools in South Carolina have a structured mentoring program to support all new teachers. The staff at Lexington School district are said to provide support by focusing on meeting basic personal needs, helping the teachers develop inter-culturality, and helping them with pedagogical issues (Baker, 2020). The report by Baker highlighted the role of mentoring as induction support for new teachers and indicated that the experience and expertise of international teachers should not detract from their need for professional validation. Mentors are expected to assist international teachers in their adjustment to "pertinent local education practices" (Wang, 2019, p.10).

O'Hara et al. (2020) mentioned that mentorship is a common strategy to support new teachers. Mentorship is a professional transaction that includes sharing new ideas, building self-awareness for professional improvement and emotional betterment (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020). Mentoring also entails modeling, emulation, sharing, experimentation and dynamism (p.3). Mentoring is not a one-dimensional process, but may have many facets that allow the partners to engage in multiple learning activities to have professional growth (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020). Choosing a mentor that respects cultural differences is most effective (Baker, 2020). Schuleri and Saleh cautioned that

when veteran international teachers are chosen as mentors themselves, there may be resistance.

Most articles on mentoring were about new or novice teachers and the benefits of mentoring to help them adjust to teaching practices and pedagogy (O'Hara et al., 2020; Yirci, 2017). These two studies were outside of the U.S. but not in developing countries. O'Hara et al.'s study was more student-based. The researchers conducted a study to examine the influence of mentoring on students' language development indicated that although mentor is commonly used to support new teachers there were few models that examined how mentoring assisted teachers with strategies for supporting language development for ELL students (O'Hara et al., 2020). In a qualitative study, Yiric (2017) examined the perceptions of novice teachers in Turkey about a new mentoring program introduced by the Ministry of Education. The results from the study of 22 teachers showed that new teachers think mentoring is beneficial for classroom management, communication skills, professional efficiency, extending network and gaining experience (Yiric, 2017).

In a qualitative study of Chinese teachers in k-12 U.S. schools, (Wang, 2019) investigated the role of mentoring in supporting international teachers in their adjustment and found that mentoring was essential especially among foreign language teachers. Wang (2019) called the challenges faced by language teachers an "unstudied problem" (p.2) that yielded little research data but thought that the problems Chinese teachers faced in the U.S. were compounded because of their culture and background. The study by Wang revealed that having a mentor benefitted international teachers in classroom

management, managing student learning, curriculum design and lesson planning. Wang's study reiterates the view that mentoring is essential, agreeing with Shulleri that the mentee holds the key to the success of the mentoring relationship.

I found only three articles that specified the benefits of mentorship exchanges for international teachers. The study by Hutchinson and Jazzar is not considered current, but I found it relevant to international teachers so I included it in the review. The researchers proposed the need for mentors to help international teachers adjust to the U.S. environment, while Wang believed that adding the skills of internationalization, and globalization in the training objectives of colleges and universities will develop the competence of pre-service and new teachers to handle multicultural classroom settings. Hutchinson and Jazzar supported Wang's phenomenon that effective mentoring can help to improve the adaption of the international teacher to the culture of the U.S. classroom and help them experience success in an unfamiliar setting.

Shulleri (2020) posited that mentoring is necessary and has a positive influence on the adjustments and performance of new international teachers in the U.S., but teachers may be resistant for reasons of professional identity (Derakhshan et al. 2020; Poole, 2020). Mentoring resistance may take the form of tardiness, aggressive body language, indifference, and lack of creativity (Schulleri & Saleh, 2020). Teachers may also demonstrate an unwillingness to reflect on their actions and create a hindrance to benefitting from the guidance of a mentor. Resistance may happen because a number of veteran international teachers may not realize the vast differences that exist between theory and practice or between expectation and reality when they arrive in the U.S.

(Banda 2018, Dunn, 2016) so they may feel they do not need mentorship or coaching.

Effective communication between mentor and mentee can bridge the gap between theory

and practice and build a mutually respectful relationship based on principles of

professionalism, regardless of the ethnic background of the mentor (Schulleri & Saleh,

2020).

Classroom Management and Instruction

In addition to mentoring support, an analysis of research articles presented several

approaches including humanizing pedagogy (Grant et al., 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995;

Ware, 2006) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Joeng, 2021; Oliveira, 2021) to helping

international teachers adjust to their new learning environment. Using classroom

management and instructional approaches that include cultural responsiveness training

can help all teachers who have to serve students from diverse backgrounds (Hepburn et

al., 2020; Little et al., 2019; Nagro et al., 2019). With the increase of globalization and

the changing face of the U.S. classroom, teachers born both inside and outside in the U.S.

can benefit from classroom management training that includes culturally responsive

approaches to instruction and discipline (Hepburn et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2019).

Researchers believed that effective classroom management facilitates effective

instruction and vice-versa (Hepburn et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2019). The body of

research on the challenge experienced by international teachers' classroom management

did not yield many results except for the studies by Cross et al. (2011), Kombe (2017),

and Brown et al. (2019). Cross et al. concluded that Jamaican teachers had mild

discipline problems in their home countries, but struggled in the American context to gain

respect from students. The challenges with gaining respect may have several contributing factors including making connections across cultures (Siwatu et al., 2017). Kombe's study led to the conclusion that the skills of international teachers in their home countries may not be transferable to different cultural contexts.

Jamaica is one of the developing countries that teachers migrate from to teach in the U.S. Researchers who used Jamaican teachers as participants found that the teachers did not feel the same connection with students in America as they did in their home countries. A study by Dunn (2016) portrayed Jamaican teachers as having challenges connecting with their students in the U.S., who described them as aliens from a different world. The idea in Dunn's study, that the teachers desired to connect, corresponded to McEvoy and Salvador's (2020) belief that the desire to connect may make teachers more receptive to culturally responsive training. McEvoy and Salvador and Dunn both posited the idea that a prerequisite for cultural responsiveness is a desire to connect with students. Brown et al. (2019) also did a study on Jamaican teachers in their home countries to compare teachers' use of hard and soft classroom management strategies. Brown's study concluded that Jamaican teachers relied on hard discipline strategies because of the level of indiscipline in the school and that the strategies of counseling, proximity, and body language were not effective.

International teachers from Jamaica were not the only international teachers who faced challenges with classroom management while adjusting to teaching in the U.S. Debreli and Ishanova's (2019) study sought to investigate the types of student behavior exhibited in a foreign language classroom, and what strategies foreign language teachers

used to prevent and handle the behaviors. The data was collected by using semi structured interviews and observations from 44 teachers of English in a U.S. school (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019). Findings revealed that misbehavior in the foreign language classroom was similar to those in general teaching subjects. Foreign language teachers tended to use body language and positive praise, but failed to follow through with proposed challenges to deal with disruptive behaviors.

While the international teachers in Brown's study used hard classroom management practices, the foreign language teachers failed to follow through with consequences. The researchers concluded that further research is needed to understand why teachers' theoretical views about what constituted effective classroom management were not reflected in their practice (Debrelli & Ishanova, 2019). Based on these two studies, there is no congruence in the classroom management responses of teachers from outside of the U.S. By providing PD training that included cross-cultural methodologies, international teachers from developing countries may be more willing to learn new pedagogies and methods to provide instruction that meets students' diverse needs (Hepburn et al., 2020; McEvoy & Salvador, 2020).

Preventative Classroom Management Approaches

Proactive classroom management can help teachers avoid pitfalls caused by students being off task and highlight the value of planning intensive rigorous lessons as a deterrent to classroom disruption (Hepburn et al., 2020). Student engagement is cited as one of the most productive strategies because when students are spending time doing their work and learning, the incidences of misbehavior are reduced (Nagro et al., 2018).

The proactive teacher plans the lesson with consideration for the possibilities of disruption or off task behavior. Hepburn et al. supported the view that teachers must take a preventative approach to avoid the pitfalls caused by students being off task, and highlighted the value of planning intensive rigorous lessons as a deterrent to classroom disruptions. Also, on the preventive side, strategies included training teachers at the earliest part of the school year (Hou et al., 2020), examining teacher and student profiles when assigning classes (Gaias et al., 2019), and implementing evidence-based strategies for inclusive classrooms (Sobeck & Reister, 2020).

Cross-cultural training and culturally sustaining pedagogy were presented in my search of the literature as vital components to be included in PD training for effective classroom management (Cardona Multo et al., 2019; Oliveira, 2021).

Hou et al. conducted a longitudinal field quasi-experimental study to investigate the most effective time of the year to deliver cross-cultural training to new teachers. The 61 new international graduate teaching assistants were randomly assigned to receive either early or delayed training. The first training was two weeks into the fall semester, while delayed training occurred two months into the fall semester (p. 1). Data showed that the graduate assistants who received early training had better cross-cultural adjustment than their counterparts who received delayed training. The study by Hou et al. presented with limitations since timing was the only factor that was measured, both groups were analyzed for the variable at the same time, and there was no control group to eliminate other possible contributing factors. Additionally, Hou et al.'s study was, at that time, possibly the only study that measured the effect of the timing of cross-cultural

training so there is no data to enable comparative analysis for validity of the conclusions. An additional gap in the study is that the participants are assistants, not teachers. So, the data may not be transferable (Hou et al., 2020).

While providing timely training for teachers in classroom management practices was a theme in the review of literature, teacher profiles emerged as a possible obstacle to the effectiveness of cross-cultural training in classroom management approaches. The study by Gaias et al. used the person-centered approach to examine the relationship between classroom management practices, including cultural responsiveness, on teachers' cultural profiles. Data was collected through observation from 103 middle school teachers. The study explored how teachers' classroom management profiles correlated to the characteristics of classroom climate and student behaviors as teachers exhibited bias in their disciplinary approach based on the profile of the student. Grant et al. (2018), who supported the idea of multi-culturalism, promoted "woke citizenship" which encourages all citizens including individuals in the educational arena to advocate for the right of the marginalized groups in our society. Grant et al. believed that educational spaces must be avenues for authentic expression an inclusion of diverse perspectives.

Gaias et al.'s study revealed that cultural responsiveness may be used in addition to other classroom management strategies to enrich the learning environment and that the teachers with low levels of classroom management also exhibited low levels of cultural responsiveness. Because the teachers who practiced cultural responsiveness did so as an extension of already established effective classroom management, it was a logical assumption that the teachers with low levels of cultural responsiveness did not effectively

implement classroom management strategies and may need additional training with basic classroom management strategies (Gaias et al., 2019).

Gaias et al.'s study had several anomalies that may negate the argument about the effectiveness of cross-cultural training. One gap in the study by Gaias et al. is that the problem statement or purpose was not easily identifiable. I noted that the participants included more black and male teachers than the national or state average, limiting the transferability of the results (p. 131). The profile of the teacher makes a difference in the classroom management approach. Similar to Hou et al., Gaias et al. advocated for culturally responsiveness or cross-cultural training for all teachers.

In addition to timely cross-cultural training and examining the match between teachers' profiles and students' groups, scholars mentioned the evidence-based preventative classroom management strategies that can work for new and veteran teachers alike. Sobeck and Reister (2020) shared 10 research-based strategies that would be easily implemented and applicable to all tiers of the Behavioral Management System in a school. The foundation for the article was in response to the call for inclusive classrooms that serve diverse populations, especially students with disabilities (p. 1). The strategies mentioned by Sobeck and Reister were incorporating choice, pre-correction for preventing negative behavior patterns, high probability request sequence to increase students' level of compliance, scheduled non-contingent attention, using effective instructional practices that allowed students to respond to engaging lessons, and using positive and negative reinforcement to decrease challenging behavior (p.73). The other strategies were behavior specific praise, mystery motivator which involved a game-like

element to motivate students based on their preferences, good behavior game which is a team-based behavior management strategy, and implementation fidelity and data collection (p. 73).

Although the research study by Sobeck and Reister was not experimental, the strategies presented could be included in a training program for teachers to prevent classroom management issues. Strategies used in inclusive classrooms that house students with disabilities can also apply to other cultural contexts because it is based on a student's individual identity (Baranova, 2018).

Responsive Classroom Management Approaches

Teachers may not always be able to predict what classroom management issues may arise from day to day. The three examples of responsive or reactive approaches that emerged from my search of the literature were using empathy (Warren, 2018), intercultural education (Little et al., 2019), and practicing reflection (Robison, 2020).

Warren elaborated on the importance of practicing perspective-taking, or empathy, to understand their students better. Warren further suggested that PD be provided to teacher candidates by way of field experiences, critical classroom discourse, and engaging with literature that centers equity across the teacher education curriculum. Robison's theory of practicing deep reflection and increasing individual techniques for building respect across cultural divides can translate into creating an environment that builds bridges rather than barriers (Dunn, 2016). The article by Robison aimed to present strategies for making meaningful connections with students' families that were from different cultures. One strategy was practicing mutual respect. Mutual respect would be

evident when teachers learned students' names, pronounced them correctly, followed

name formality customs, asked probing, clarifying questions and navigated through

different communication styles and temperaments. The next strategy was confronting

personal, implicit biases. Robison requested that teachers confront their personal biases

and learn conversational format is expected to build mutual respect in the classroom

environment of a pluralistic setting.

Although both Robison and Warren encouraged teachers to practice reflective

teaching in a cultural context, Warren's took the practice of reflection in the direction of

training teachers to examine the social, political, and historical context of their classroom

settings. Robison believed that through reflection, teachers are building capacity for

demonstrating empathy as evidence of culturally responsive pedagogy.

Few of the studies that I examined on responsive classroom management

practices were experimental or investigative. A possible explanation for the small number

of experimental articles was the fact that the body of research on the perspectives or

experiences of international teachers is limited (Bense, 2016; Debrisheli & Ishanova,

2019).

In my research findings, cross-cultural training was used synonymously with

intercultural communication (Serin, 2017), intercultural competence (Baranova, 2018),

intercultural learning (Debrisheli & Ishanova, 2019), intercultural education, cultural

responsiveness (Little et al., 2019; Myers, 2019), cultural sensitivity (Nagro et al., 2018),

and cultural awareness (Baranova, 2018; Hou et al., 2018). The different faces of cross-

cultural training all reflect the same principle that professionals must receive training in

how to interact successfully with the students from a different culture towards building

mutually respectful relationships, and help establish a classroom environment where

effective instruction can take place. Kombe (2017) and Schulleri and Saleh (2020)

suggested that the skills of international teachers are not necessarily transferable across

cultures so they will need some training and support towards making the transition

between educational systems.

The studies relevant to the training of international teachers were discourses about

the strategies, theories and conceptual frameworks that could be used to help teachers

adjust to a cross-cultural setting. Scholars agreed that classroom management and

instructional practices for all teachers would improve if they received cross-cultural or

culturally responsive training (Baker, 2020; Dalal et al., 2017; Dalal et al., 2021; Hepburn

et al., 2020; Larson et al., 2018; Little et al., 2019; Mamiseishvili & Lee, 2018; Nagro et

al., 2018). Since my research is going to be investigative, the data can provide scientific

evidence to be used as a frame of reference for future studies on the experiences of

international teachers from developing countries.

Instruction in a Diverse Environment

It has already been established that the educational contexts of the U.S. and more

than one developing country are different and that teachers will have challenges with

adjustment (Baker, 2020; Dalal et al., 2021; Furuya et al., 2019; Sahling & Decarvalho,

2021). The differences between the two instructional contexts may be described as a

pedagogical mismatch that present issues regarding transferability of practices (Brown et

al., 2010; Kombe, 2017). Yet, international teachers who come to the U.S. are required to

meet the same standards as their American counterparts and must produce evidence of student achievement (Baker, 2020). American schools are becoming more diverse with the influx of international teachers to fill vacancies, and with the varying and changing identities of the student population (Baker, 2020). There is congruence among scholars that diversity in the educational context refers to differences in race, sexual orientation, religion, cultural background, disabilities, and socioeconomic status (Ozturgut, 2017; Petts, 2020). A diverse classroom is defined as a room filled with students from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds, nationalities, different reading levels, individual learning styles, and levels of functionality with technology, sexual orientation, and religious beliefs (Ozturgut et al., 2017; Petts, 2020) as well as other idiosyncrasies which exist in our globalized, digital world.

Contemporary pedagogies offer ideas of how to help prepare teachers for instructing diverse populations. The principles of the culturally sustaining pedagogy, as described by Joeng (2021) and Oliveira (2021) favor the use of agency to enhance the learning of multilingual learners and enrich the lives of diverse populations. There is no way to predict the nature or method of student learning using strategies that validate the individuality of students and the context that they bring to the classroom. Ladson-Billings (1995) and Tate (1994) believed that implementing culturally relevant pedagogy in the classroom will enrich the learning experiences of especially African- American students when the language and experiences of home are reflected in the classroom. Warm demander pedagogy made popular by Ware (2006), supposed that African American students are better served by teachers who teach more than academics and who

demonstrate caring for students and community. Humanizing pedagogy supports holistic educations that develop the whole person (Freeman et al., 2020; Salazar, 2013). The approach purports building strong relationships between students and teachers to positively influence learning outcomes and promote achievement (Salazar, 2013). Likewise, Freeman et al. propose the effectiveness of applying the humanizing approach to teacher preparation programs towards helping teachers manage the reality of the impossibilities and unpredictable nature of the teaching transaction based on students' diverse backgrounds.

The challenges faced by international teachers surround instructional planning and delivery that must facilitate new pedagogies (McEvoy & Salvador, 2020; Ozturgut, 2017) for inclusion in classrooms with diverse populations (Cardona-Multo et al., 2018; Little et al., 2019). The problem for this study focuses on how international teachers from developing countries perceive the challenges with adjusting to the instructional expectations of the American classroom that includes a mandated curriculum.

Researchers shared the idea that effective PD in unfamiliar instructional practices can help the teachers adjust to the new type of classroom (Dalal et al., 2021; Suter & Camilli, 2019). Obregon and Pletcher (2019) posited that teaching practices must align with the shifting demographics and said that classroom management and instructional practices must account for language, cultural diversity, and the broad range of identities reflected in today's population. The studies by Dalal et al. concluded that instructional training needed to be provided to increase international teachers' understanding of teaching and learning approaches that lead to success for all students. This view was

supported by (Baker, 2020) who compiled a report on the historic developments of education in the state for the research project. The report highlighted how the changing requirements continue to influence teacher induction programs in the Southern state, as well as recruitment and retention in the state.

While several researchers agreed on the need for training in instruction, technological training was not identified as an area of need. Baker's report corroborated the conclusions by Dalal et al. that although international teachers are coming from most developing countries, technological training was not identified as a major need. The conclusions of the mixed-methods study by Dalal et al. highlighted that international teacher have access to technology and are accustomed to using digital products as part of lesson planning and instructional delivery. Scholars suggested that since instructional strategies and approaches are most likely included in the teacher preparation programs for all it would be difficult to specify what strategies each and every international teacher would need (Dalal et al., 2017, 2021).

PD training in intervention strategies specific to the Southern state can be included in the professional training for teachers who migrate to teach in the U.S. In a separate study, Dalal et al. found that intervention programs such as technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK) can significantly assist teachers from developing countries in planning effectively for the needs of their students in the American classroom. The professional needs of international teachers are mostly centered on the right training, mentorship and support of the teachers as global learners (Little et

al., 2019) and prepare them to meet the needs of diverse students in the U.S. classroom (Ozturgut, 2017; Petts, 2020).

Whether the training is specifically for international teachers or American natives, the attitudes of teachers towards training will make a difference in how effectively they implement any strategy that they will use in instruction (Baker, 2020; Joeng, 2021). Although several researchers indicated that diversity training is necessary to prepare teachers for the changing demographics of classrooms across the world (Dalal et al., 2021; Little et al., 2019; McEvoy & Salvador, 2020), one researcher highlighted that teachers' perceptions about the training may negatively influence their willingness to implement strategies for inclusion and equity (Cardona-Multo et al., 2018). Cardona-Multo et al. did a comparative study to explore the perceptions of student-teachers in the U.S. and Spain on learning to teach in diverse, inclusive classrooms. The teacher's perceptions were evaluated based on (1) opportunity to learn theory and knowledge, (2) opportunity to learn inclusive teaching strategies, and (3) opportunity to observe and analyze authentic components of sensitive teaching in a diverse context (Cardona-Multo et al., 2018).

Results of the comparative study between pre-service teachers showed that the U.S. student-teachers showed significantly higher ratings of opportunity to learn to teach in a diverse setting. An observation from the study by Cardona-Multo et al. showed that although pre-service educators in the U.S. claimed to value diversity, their classroom practices did not reflect any changes to accommodate diversity.

Researchers indicated that the attitudes of teachers to diversity may determine whether teachers are willing to implement the training they receive. There is a connection between the conclusions of the study by Cardona-Multo et al. about the disparity between teachers claiming to value diversity and implementing strategies to demonstrate diversity and inclusion and Petts (2020) who challenged the view that American teachers value diversity. Petts pointed out that the difficulty teacher's face with practicing instruction for diversity and inclusion is based on the ambiguity of the meaning of diversity. The subjectivity of the interpretation may influence how teachers approach instruction in a diverse setting (Culham, 2019; Petts, 2020).

The two interpretations of diversity presented by Petts are cultural diversity that refers to people of color, and color-blind diversity does not make the meaning specific to inclusion of racial minorities (Petts, 2020). Culham made the connection to literacy development pointed out that since 87% of the teachers in the U.S. are white, choice of materials for instruction may not always accurately reflect the demographics of the student population which is 49.5% non-white (p. 509). The recommendation by Cardona-Multo et al. that teacher preparation programs increase training for diversity becomes poignant in creating a common understanding of the nature of diversity in a school.

Besides the need for training in diversity instruction and approaches to facilitate inclusion, researchers also suggested that teachers must be prepared to manage and instruct in a diverse setting (Culham, 2019; Dion, 2020; Nagro et al., 2018; Petts, 2020; Ozturgut, 2017). Hinner (2020), who proposed a curriculum to teach intolerance based on a conceptual approach, suggested that any curriculum designed to address the intolerance

that comes with diversity would encourage teachers to practice meta-cognition towards examining their own levels of self-awareness before they can implement any strategies to encourage inclusion. The concept of meta-cognition in Hinner's study connects with Robison's idea of practicing self-reflection to address issues of cultural diversity and Culham's idea of reflecting on biases that may influence the choice of books for literacy instruction.

The search for articles about instruction for diversity and inclusion produced mostly theoretical propositions (Robison, 2020), narrative enquiries (Dion, 2020) reports, and presentations about what should constitute curriculum (Petts, 2020), instruction in diversity (Culham, 2019), and perceptions about diversity training (Dalal et al., 2021; Hinner, 2020; McEvoy & Salvador, 2020; Ozturgut, 2017; Robison, 2020;). I did not find an investigative study about diversity training in the south except for Cardona-Multo et al.'s study about student teachers in diverse settings, and Dion's study of the perceptions of world language teachers in Northern U.S. about implementing strategies for diversity and inclusion. Dion recommended that further research be done to collect data from teachers and other stakeholders on implementing effective instructional strategies in a diverse setting. Few studies, if any, had participants from South Carolina, developing countries, middle and high school teachers.

Challenges With Mandated Curriculum

The problem for this research is that international teachers in the local setting face challenges with adjusting to mandated curriculum that may influence their classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The two terms have

already been defined in Chapter one. The review of literature revealed that mandated

curriculum created challenges with teachers delivering instruction. The findings were not

specific to international teachers.

Mandated curriculum became an issue in education when President George W.

Bush signed the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) law in 2002 as an accountability measure

(Valdez, 2020). The inclusion of test scores as criteria in determining school report card

ratings made principals more vigilant about ensuring the state mandated curriculum was

strictly followed. Researchers concluded that faithfully following the mandates of states

restricted the freedom of teachers to stop making decisions that benefited their students

(McCarthey & Woodard, 2018). Teachers who experienced success with student

achievement negotiated or challenged the curriculum, while risking the satisfaction of

their superiors (Ahmed, 2019; Aukerman & Shuldt, 2017; Hos & Kaplan-Wolff, 2019;

Myers, 2019). Many teachers left the profession causing the U.S. to experience a growing

teacher shortage (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). The teacher shortage in

American is one reason international teachers from developing countries started

migrating to the U.S. to fill vacancies (Caulder, 2017; Self & Dulaney, 2018;).

Mandated curriculum raised state; district and school's expectations for the way

teachers did their jobs and changed the learning environment to one that was more

stressful for both teachers and students. McCarthey and Woodard confirmed that factors

such as policies, PD, and administrative expectations had a significant influence on the

way teachers carried out their instruction. Delaney et al. observed that the pressure of

standardized tests turned classrooms into dead zones that do not provide effective

instruction to meet the needs of the students. Teachers found themselves in a predicament where they had to choose between obeying authority and making decisions that were in the best interest of their students (Castello & Castello, 2016; Erss, 2018; Myers, 2019). McCarthey and Woodard disagreed that such a choice is in favor of autonomy because most times the choice of whether to follow the mandated curriculum or deviate from it led to most teachers choosing to stick with the script.

A few teachers who experienced success with mandated curriculum felt compelled to make unpopular choices. Myers (2019) carried out a study of language arts teachers who chose to modify the mandated English curriculum to teach British Literature because it facilitates cultural responsiveness and to add enjoyment to her instruction. Aukerman and Shuldt (2017) gathered data that showed the possibility of success with making adjustments to the mandated curriculum by veteran teachers who were more comfortable doing so. Hos and Kaplan-Wolff (2020) validated the notion that teachers who are seeking to increase student achievement have to negotiate the scripted curriculum or become a "transgressive teacher" to achieve student success goals (Myers, 2019). Ahmed's (2019) study of pre-service teachers concluded that it is possible to marry the two worlds of mandated curriculum and teacher choice to create meaningful learning experiences for the students (Ahmed, 2019; Myers, 2019; Hos & Kaplan-Wolff, 2020).

Sometimes mandates may be assumed to be synonymous with best practices that constitute good teaching. Leaders take ownership for the instructional decisions they make and then follow through their beliefs by insisting that teachers do what they are

told. Day (2019) challenged the notion that "good teaching" is based on a set of standards that are rigidly followed. Day asserted that narrowly framed competencies are useless if "they are used as sticks to ensure compliance rather than encourage review and further development" (p. 3). Good teaching requires the teacher to bring their best selves to the classroom and be willing and ready to manage diverse classrooms regardless of personal or professional circumstances. Edger agreed with Day and posited that their mandated curriculum stifles constructivism and represses the creativity of students and teachers that come naturally with using the constructivist approach. Nagro et al. (2018) expressed the theory that teachers can serve all students best if they use engaging strategies to hold students' interest. She argued that teachers can embed "proactive research-based strategies within their lesson plans to reduce behavior problems and improve achievement for all students, including students with disabilities" (p. 1).

Autonomy

Each article I reviewed about challenges with mandated curriculum resonated with the theme of autonomy as one way to manage and negotiate the mandated curriculum. The data revealed that autonomy may be a misunderstood concept (Ahmed, 2019). Gao (2018) positioned autonomy as a necessary factor in developing student autonomy. The demands of accountability, especially regarding test scores and annual yearly progress (AYP) caused instructional shifts that affected the way teachers handled their jobs (Valdez, 2020). International teachers are coming from an autonomy-supportive environment where they have a reasonable level of control over their classrooms (Kissau, 2014) and where autonomy ranked highly as motivation to continue

teaching (Brown et al., 2020; Banda, 2018; Kinkead-Clark, 2018). PD and personal empowerment were among the reasons the international teachers decided to teach in the U. S. (Serbes, 2017).

The age of accountability has created several obstacles that can deter international teachers from infusing their inherent talents in the U.S. classroom, to meet the needs of their diverse learners (Alexander & Jang, 2020; Wright et al., 2018). Lack of autonomy was identified in the review of literature as one obstacle that not only prevented teachers from doing their best, but also contributed to the high teacher attrition rate (Caulder, 2017; Valdez, 2020). Serbes (2017) stressed that experienced international teachers are effective in achieving student success and claimed that although PD is one main reason for teachers wanting to come to the U.S., without autonomy, there is little empowerment (Keifer & Pennington, 2017). Without autonomy, teachers will not have room for self-reflection and professional growth (Poole, 2020; Serbes, 2017; Robison, 2020). The phenomenon that when teachers are allowed to make mistakes and learn from them, they will grow, is supported by Serbes (2017) and Roth (2014).

The scholars that I reviewed acknowledged that there are risks with giving teachers autonomy that may not have the capacity to use it responsibly. Although Knight (2019) acknowledged the possibility of irresponsible accountability, he still advocated for teachers to receive responsible autonomy that allows them to take ownership of their classroom choices. In the conversation with the instructional coaches and school leaders, the teachers can make some of the decisions about what they will do in the context of the mandated curriculum. Wang (2019) proposed that the correlation between management

autonomy, teacher autonomy, and student autonomy should encourage dialogue that will empower all teachers to make those difficult decisions based on classroom dynamics. Wang argued that if the states gave the districts and school leaders some measure of autonomy, then it was only fair that autonomy should filter down to the teachers who are expected to teach autonomy as a 21-century skill to their students (Keifer & Pennington, 2017; Robison, 2020).

Researchers felt that lack of autonomy may jeopardize the professional identity of teachers. Castello and Castello (2016) indicated that de-professionalization of teachers occurs when they are treated as passive receptors of instructions and advice about teaching. The researchers asserted that teachers are likely to feel and demonstrate greater efficacy when they have a strong sense of autonomy over what they do. Grant et al. (2018) advocated for a graduated system of autonomy where the teacher would earn autonomy with experience.

Management autonomy, teacher autonomy, and student autonomy are interconnected (Vieira, 2020). There must be an authentic shared understanding of autonomy and a balance among management autonomy, teacher autonomy and student autonomy to design and implement an innovative curriculum (Wang, 2019). Teachers grow professional self-efficacy by facing constraints and independently finding ways to meet students' needs and interests in the process of democratic education. Grant et al. (2020) agreed that teachers should have autonomy, but proposed that leaders give it in increments that align with the teachers' professional growth as it influences their decisions to "grow or go" in the profession.

Teachers have always had to practice adaptability even in the face of accountability (Collie & Martin, 2017; Paufler, 2018). Teachers have to use autonomy even if it is not given to them formally, so leaders may be wise to allow some level of autonomy to teachers. In an emergency such as a power outage or technology system going down, teachers think on their feet and adjust. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway (2020) used the Covid-19 pandemic scenarios to emphasize the resilience of teachers and their ability to make adjustments in favor of their students. Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway also referenced the skillful way teachers across the globe adjusted to online learning when administrators and school leaders could not provide support to them because everyone was learning. Having the chance to take control of the situation with Covid-19 pandemic and being trusted to do the best they could was an opportunity for teachers to show their competence.

The conceptual framework for this study supports the international teacher's need for autonomy and expanded the notion that the development of autonomous motivation will foster a greater sense of competence in instructional delivery (Erss, 2018). Best practices are encouraging teachers to create a learner-centered environment that fosters the development of global skills of problem solving, and autonomy. A learner-centered environment needs the teacher to be autonomous. Mercer (2018) informed that lack of autonomy can cause stress, communication problems and anger. Those suffering from lack of autonomy are controlled by what others feel, do, and think and you adapt accordingly.

Teachers want the freedom to make decisions about curriculum, textbooks, instructional techniques, grading policies, and classroom management (Baker, 2020). With some autonomy, all teachers may experience less stress and experience success (Erss, 2018; Larson & Bradshaw, 2017). The SDT posits that teachers will do their best when they feel competent (Erss, 2018; Guay et al., 2017) agreed that based on the SDT, the development of autonomous motivation will foster a greater level of competence in instructional delivery, which is an asset in the learner-centered classroom. One way to develop self-efficacy is to allow teachers to learn from their mistakes and practice problem-solving skills (Day, 2019) and build self–efficacy. Ryan and Ryan (2019) grounded autonomy in the Self Determination Theory, and offered that giving teachers autonomy would engender authentic interactions that encourage genuineness and authenticity in the teacher's disposition to bring out the ideal self in the classroom. The notion of authenticity resonated with Castello and Castello's analogy that teachers feel like architects and treated as construction workers (Torres, 2014) when they operate on mandates that did not involve their input (Cheon et al., 2020). Authenticity entails autonomy, congruence, and genuineness that positively influence student performance (Akram, 2019; Marshik, et al., 2019).

The qualitative studies that I reviewed did not have the same research questions as this study verbatim. However, the questions were worded, they were based on perceptions about the teachers about their experiences about one aspect or the other of their jobs. A few had questions regarding classroom management choice (Brown et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2018; Özen & Remzi, 2020), negotiating the required curriculum to be

culturally responsive (McCarthey & Woodard, 2018; Mulcahy, 2018; Myers, 2019).

Several studies had questions about perception regarding autonomy and adaptability

(Collie & Martin, 2017; Knight, 2019). Ospina and Medina based their research questions

about perceptions on the benefits and challenges of teaching in a foreign country while

Mamiseishvili and Lee (2018) focused on the job satisfaction working in the new context.

Little et al., (2019) like Collie and Martin focused on adaptability in the context of

globalization. Maravillas (2021) along with Kinkead-Clark (2018) asked questions about

job satisfaction.

There were some misconceptions about autonomy that were worthy of mention.

Teacher autonomy is not the same as self-efficacy or empowerment (Wermeke et al.,

2019). Erss (2018) cautioned school leaders not to practice making assumptions about

teachers' autonomy needs, or adopt a one size fits all approach when it comes to deciding

on the level of autonomy support that any teacher needs. Delaney et al. (2018) supported

this concept of teachers having ownership of instructional decisions that directly

influenced their classrooms and students instead of just following mandates (Eren, 2020).

By being self-directed, the teachers build self–esteem, become life-long learners, and

carry out the reflective practice (Choi & Mao, 2021). Teachers may not feel like robots

teaching other little robots (Endacott et al., 2015) or architects hired as construction

workers (Castello & Castello, 2016). Choi and Mao presented the idea that collaboration

among teachers from various backgrounds is an effective strategy to help new teachers

develop self-efficacy and engage in reflective practice (Ralph et al., 2020; Tomlinson,

2019). Freedom to make decisions is not a selfish desire to do as one pleases, but the

right of an individual to self–direct and the freedom to make informed, unforced decisions (Aoki, 2002; Day, 2019; Myers, 2019; Tomlinson, 2019).

The implications for social change surround cultural and ethnic inclusion. It is pertinent that school leaders make decisions about educational policies and practices that reflect the differences of the changing face of the changing teacher demographics (Baker, 2020; Obregon & Pletcher, 2019). The diverse perspectives that are collected in collaborative setting with teachers from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds can generate a richer pool of ideas (Phillips, 2014; Ralph et al., 2020). The perceptions of international teachers may validate the training and expertise of foreign professionals and add to the body of research on mandated curriculum and instructional practices that influenced student success. Understanding what international teachers need to do their job effectively may improve instructional quality and increase student achievement (Baker, 2020; Seah, 2017).

Summary and Conclusions

The review of literature suggested that mentoring, PD in classroom management, and cross -cultural training are relevant to creating a mutually beneficial interaction between international teachers from developing countries and their American students (Little et al., 2019). In reviewing the literature, I synthesized the research on the variables in the problem statement from the context that the international teachers must adjust to a different cultural context.

The concepts I researched had implications for all teachers, but there were a few articles that were unique to the experiences of international teachers from developing

countries. International teachers usually migrate for PD and a better life (Banda, 2018; Dunn, 2016). The teachers face challenges in both the personal and professional lives (Dunn, 2016; Seah, 2017; Serin, 2017). Personal challenges included culture shock (Spegman, 2017), language barriers (Parmigiani, 2019; Sierra & Lopera, 2020; Serin, 2017), classroom management practices (Brown, et al. 2020; Nagro et al., 2018) and lack of autonomy (Kinkead-Clark, 2018). Teachers need training in instructional practices and cross-cultural training yet cautioned that international teachers did not need technology training (Choi et al., 2021; Dalal et al. 2017; Dalal et al., 2021; Little et al., 2019; Nagro et al., 2018). In addition to induction, teachers need PD training to adjust to their new teaching assignments (Dalal et al., 2017; Baker, 2020) and could benefit from mentoring (Shuleri & Selah, 2020; Suter & Camilli, 2019), culturally sustaining pedagogy and humanizing pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Joeng, 2021; Oliveira, 2021; Tate, 1994; Ware, 2006;), along with cross cultural training (Cardona-Multo et al., 2018).

The review of literature supported the idea that cross-cultural training can build bridges to help international teachers connect with their students to reduce issues with classroom management (Ahmed, 2019; Nagro et al., 2018; Siwatu et al., 2017; Vieira, 2020). I also discovered in the research of relevant literature that teachers need autonomy to bridge the gap between the demands of mandated curriculum and the needs of students (Aukerman & Shuldt, 2019; Cullen et al.; 2012; Day, 2019; Myers, 2019).

The study was designed to fill the gap in the literature where the voice of the international teacher from the developing countries can be added to the discussion about mandated curriculum, instructional practices, and the challenges these resent for their

adjustment. While the literature is replete with suggestions, ideas, and theories from various researchers, none of these studies detail the experiences of teachers in South Carolina. Kinkead-Clark's study which focused on teachers in the Caribbean found no evidence regarding an adjustment process. The research site was in the Caribbean and the content of the study was more about motivation, autonomy, teachers' job satisfaction, and retentions. Neither mandated curriculum nor instructional practices were variables in the research. My study filled that gap in the literature by providing data from the perspectives of international teachers from developing countries about mandated curriculum and instructional practices as well as the needs of the international teachers who come to teach in the U.S.

In chapter 3, I will explain the methodology for the research study. This will include the research design and rationale, role of the researcher, methodology, and procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection. Chapter 3 will provide details on the data analysis plan, trustworthiness issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and ethical procedures.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature on international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in the U.S. The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries on the challenges that they face with adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence their classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. In Chapter 3, I outline the research design and rationale; my role as the researcher; the methodology, including participant selection, instrumentation, and procedures for recruitment, participation, and data collection; and the data analysis plan. I also explain issues with trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The last section of this chapter addresses the ethical considerations for this qualitative study.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this basic qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of the international middle and high school teachers in a rural school district in South Carolina on the challenges that they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement.

The following research questions were developed to carry out the investigation:

RQ1.   What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in the southern United States regarding the

challenges that they face when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and

instructional practices in the United States?

RQ2   What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers

from developing countries at a rural high school in the southern United

States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices

on classroom management practices?

RQ3.   What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers

on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to

mandated curriculum less challenging?

The central phenomenon of the study was the perceptions of international middle

and high school teachers from developing countries on the challenges that they face with

adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence

classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The research

tradition used for this investigation was a basic qualitative design with an exploratory

focus. I opted for a basic qualitative instead of a quantitative design because the

phenomenon of interest involved the perceptions of international teachers (see Babbie,

2008; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) clarified that a basic qualitative

study is grounded in constructivism.

I was interested in understanding the meaning of the phenomenon from the point

of view of the participants. Meaning is not discovered but constructed as participants

engage in discourse about their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and

Tisdell (2016) further asserted that qualitative researchers gather nonnumerical data and

that researchers using descriptive research design seek to describe what they observe. Creswell and Creswell (2018) said that qualitative researchers are interested in unearthing the meaning that participants give to a phenomenon or research problem. Merriam and Tisdell defined qualitative research as attempting to understand how people make sense of their reality. Qualitative research goes beyond rapport and focuses on authentic engagement in the participants' natural settings (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Creswell and Creswell posited that qualitative research is usually based on a phenomenon that has not been studied deeply, and where a researcher wants to build an understanding of the phenomenon from the participants' perspective. Burkholder et al. (2016) concurred that qualitative research is exploratory and helps in understanding complex phenomena through observation and description.

In deciding on a qualitative research design, other options that I considered were grounded theory, phenomenology, and case study. I decided against alternative approaches because I was not interested in why the problem occurred or the development of an experience over time. I attempted to understand the nature of the adjustment to the mandated curriculum from the perspective of international teachers from developing countries. My interest lay in how the teachers interpret their experiences; how they construct their world and the meaning that they give to their experiences with adjustment. The overall purpose was to understand the sense that participants make of their experiences with adjustment to teaching in the U.S. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Creswell and Creswell (2018) described the case study as a process of inquiry where the researcher analyzes a particular case such as a program, event, activity, or

process, or even an individual's performance in depth over some time. The case study

approach did not align with the purpose or problem for my study. A phenomenological

approach did not align with the purpose or problem of the study. Phenomenology is

usually used to explore the general meaning and essence of all of the experiences from a

person or group of people. Creswell and Creswell stated that phenomenology does not

attempt to build the essence of experience from participants and does not employ any

explicit theory.

Although all the participants were international teachers from developing

countries, they were from several different locations, age groups, grade levels, subject

areas, and years of experience. The phenomenological approach would not have been the

best choice based on the demographics of the sample of participants. Moreover, my

research project did not involve studying the teachers as individuals; rather, I sought to

study their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I did not choose the grounded

theory approach because the purpose of the research study was not to generate

hypotheses or theories about teachers from developing countries in the U.S. (Babbie,

2008). My aim in the research study was to understand the teachers' perceptions about

their adjustment to the mandated curriculum in the U.S. A basic qualitative approach

seemed the best choice (Lodico et al., 2010; Patton, 2015).

Role of the Researcher

A qualitative researcher performs several functions during the research process

and assumes multiple roles. The roles include selecting participants, designing research

questions, conducting interviews, transcribing and analyzing data, verifying information,

and reporting findings (Saldaña, 2016). For this study, I carried out all the functions in the research process. My experience as a previous international teacher from a developing country on a J-1 Visa may have influenced how I approached and organized the review of the literature. I designed the research questions and carried out the personal interviews. Because of the safety protocols of the Covid-19 pandemic and the skepticism that some individuals still had about face-to-face contact, I facilitated the interviews on Zoom, Google Meet, and telephone. It was my role as a researcher to record the audio of the interviews and do the transcriptions. My role as a researcher also involved coding, looking for patterns, categorizing, and generating themes to get closer to the data and gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences (Saldaña, 2016).

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, I submitted an application packet to the director of testing, accountability, gifted and talented, and Title III at the district office. The application packet included the institution, course of study, program of study, purpose of the research, and use of data. When permission was granted, I obtained a list of all international teachers in middle and high school. I sent invitation emails with a consent form to all middle and high school teachers from developing countries employed by the school district. Teachers had 2 weeks to respond and ask questions before agreeing to participate. Once the teachers indicated their interest, I called all the potential middle and high school teacher participants who indicated interest and used the selection criteria to narrow my sample to 15 teachers.

I did not envision any issues with personal or professional relationships with the participants. Although I work in the school district, I am located at a separate high school.

The only time when I might have interacted with the other international teachers in the district was during our initial district opening meeting or a district wide PD relevant to my subject area or grade level. I had no power or supervisory role over the participants. New international teachers may have regarded me as an experienced teacher, but that would have been their perception based on my years of experience in the U.S. To avoid any potential bias, I did not select teachers I had worked with directly in the past or with whom I had a personal relationship.

Several ethical issues can arise during qualitative research, including confidentiality, researcher–participant relationship, and informed consent (Babbie, 2008). Confidentiality concerns were addressed by placing a clause in the informed consent letter to the potential participants. No names or any identifying characteristics were included in the research report. Participants were assigned alphanumeric identifiers (i.e., International Teacher 1 [IT-1], International Teacher 2 [IT-2], (see Lodico et al., 2010), which were used for the interviews, recordings, transcripts, and reports.

There were no issues with the researcher–participant relationship because the participants and I did not work at the same school, only in the same school district. I did not share a friendship or kinship with any member of the school district where I was employed. The only affiliation that I might have had with any participant was that they might have been from my home country, Jamaica, or my Parish (St. Thomas) in Jamaica. To address the relationship issue, I reminded the participants that my role was that of a researcher and not that of a colleague, a parishioner, or a friend.

The confidentiality issue may have caused concern for participants because they may have been afraid of backlash or reprisals if they shared their true feelings about their experiences. The participants received detailed information about the purpose of the research, the data to be collected, how the data would be used, and the audience for the study. Participants were given a summary of data findings after the results were approved.

Methodology

Participant Selection

The population for this research study consisted of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries on a J1 visa. To gain a somewhat diverse sample, I chose international teachers of different grade levels, subject areas, lengths of time teaching in the state, gender identities, recruiting agencies, and countries of origin. The purposeful sampling strategy described by Lodico et al. (2010) is one in which the researcher chooses participants who are key informants or "persons who have some specific knowledge about the topic being investigated" (p. 140). Cohen et al. (2007) cautioned that sampling issues must be considered at the very outset of the research process for purposes of reliability and validity.

I chose the school district because of convenience and easy access to participants as suggested by Cohen et al. (2007) Access to international middle and high school teachers' email addresses is available through the district network, and I did not choose to study the school where I work for ethical reasons. I sought to avoid social desirability bias, which could have arisen if participants with close knowledge of me gave me

answers that I wanted to hear instead of honest responses. For that reason, I chose

participants whom I did not know to negate the risk of receiving biased information. Lack

of anonymity can possibly cause fear in participants, making them unwilling to share

negative information. They may be fearful of declining the invitation to participate out of

fear of damaging the professional relationship. Providing confidentiality and using a

school in which I did not work was done to eliminate the fear. If I had chosen schools or

districts outside of my city, there would have been issues with cost, convenience, and

lack of accessibility of participants.

Mason (2010) theorized that the number of participants in a qualitative study is

determined by saturation and suggested that the minimum number of interviews be 15.

Saturation is usually reached when there would be no new data added from more

participants and the information becomes redundant (Mason, 2010; Ravitch & Carl,

2016). The major criteria for selecting participants were as follows: be an international

middle or high school teacher from a developing country on a J1 visa, teach a tested

subject or a world language, and be recruited by EPI, FACES, or Participate Learning.

All other variables such as country of origin, subject taught, or recruiting agency allowed

for congruence and diversity in the responses.

The participants were known to have met the criteria from the list that I obtained

from an individual at the district office in the personnel department. Cohen et al. (2007)

also stated that in qualitative research, the sample size is small. Fifteen international

middle and high school teachers agreed to participate in the study. Because a basic

qualitative study is conducted to understand the participants' experiences and may

require in-depth analysis, a small number was acceptable (Lodico et al., 2010).

Participants were offered a thank you note and given the option of a $10 Starbucks,

Amazon, or Wal-Mart gift card based on preference. Participants had the option to accept

or decline.

Instrumentation

The data collection tool used in this research study was an interview protocol with

open-ended questions. I used semi structured interviews to allow teachers to share their

perceptions in a confined and confidential setting. Babbie (2008) stated that face-to-face

interviews facilitate deep descriptions of the phenomenon of study from the perspective

of the participants. Ravitch and Carl posited that "interviews are at the center of many

qualitative studies since they provide deep, rich, individualized, and contextualized data

that are centrally important to qualitative research" (p.149). Interviews are relational,

person-centered, nonevaluative, and contextualized data collection instruments that

capture a moment in time, are subjective, and are nonneutral (Ravitch & Carl, 2016).

The interview protocol included a list of questions with a script detailing

discourse before and after the questions were asked of the participants (see Creswell &

Creswell, 2018). The interview questions represented the only opportunity to collect the

data that would answer the research questions (see Butin, 2009). The questions were

followed up by a possible prompt to delve deeper into the answers that the respondents

gave. The interview questions focused on eliciting the perceptions of the international

teachers from developing countries on the adjustment process to the mandated

curriculum, how the adjustment influenced their classroom management and instruction,

and what suggestions they had for school leaders that could make the adjustment process less challenging.

The basis for the development of the interview questions was the nature and purpose of the study, as well as the research questions. Babbie (2008) stated that face-to-face interviews facilitate deep descriptions of the phenomenon of study from the perspectives of the participants. Researchers design data collection instruments that ensure content validity or measure what they set out to measure (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I achieved content validity by strategic alignment of the research questions with the interview questions. I designed 13 interview questions with possible probes that asked for clarification to answer the three research questions. The interview questions broke down the three research questions into smaller questions and probes based on the variables for alignment. The interview questions were open ended to allow respondents the freedom to reply without being influenced in a particular direction. Probing questions were used to clarify the questions or deepen respondents' answers. The interview questions were worded based on the concept under investigation in each of the three research questions (Lodico et al., 2010). Interview audios were recorded using a Philips Voice Tracer recorder.

I transcribed all interviews using the software Otter.ai. I printed the transcripts and placed them in a binder for coding, as suggested by Saldaña (2016). In the context of the Covid-19 safety precautions and protocols, I offered participants the option of doing interviews virtually via Skye, Zoom, Google Meet, and phone. The standard interview method (SIM), as described by Powell and Brubacher (2020), involves a proper greeting,

conversational rules, practice, and closure. Powell and Brubacher proposed that open-ended interviews need structure to keep respondents focused on the purpose of the interview, and to ensure validity and credibility during the process. The interview protocol was modified to meet the specific needs of the research study and to maximize trust and understanding between interviewer and interviewee (Powell & Brubacher, 2020). Because I was seeking to gather perceptions, the interview method was sufficient as a data collection instrument. The nature of the participants' responses did not include any additional instruments that would add any new information.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

After getting IRB approval from the relevant department in the district office, I applied for permission to conduct the study to the director of testing, accountability, gifted, and Title III at the district office. The individual outlined the terms and conditions of the process and sent me a Google form to fill out with the title, population, and benefits of the study to the school district. I also had to submit confirmation for the study from Walden University. After I received approval from Walden to carry out research, I submitted a letter from Walden University with the IRB approval number to the school district office. I sent invitation emails with consent form to all middle and high school international teachers from developing countries in the school district. I also had to email the principals for consent to carry out research in their buildings. Teachers had two weeks to respond and ask questions before agreeing to participate. Once the teachers indicated their interest, I called all the potential middle and high school participants who indicated interest and use the selection criteria to narrow my sample to 15 teachers.

The interviews took place on separate days and times for each participant during after-school hours. During data collection, the privacy of the information was protected by conducting interviews via Google Meet, WhatsApp video call, and phone where participants were in the privacy of their homes or a private location of their choice. I stayed in a private room in my home where no one could hear me. Only the interviewees knew about exact date, time, and location of the interview. No other interviewee was privy to each other's interview date and time. Afternoons and weekends were preferable to avoid causing inconvenience with the mornings or conflicts with school hour obligations. There was one interview session per participant, lasting for a minimum of 45 minutes and a maximum of 60 minutes. The entire interview process with 15 participants lasted 4 weeks.

I recorded interviews on my Phillips Voice Tracer recording device or a purchased voice recorder. The interview protocol I followed included a proper greeting, an introduction to the study, the purpose of the information, and the use of data. During the interview process, I probed for a deeper understanding of participants' responses. The probing questions was anticipated and included as part of the interview process. Questions were spontaneous based on responses. After the interview process, I thanked the interviewees and followed up with a thank you email for participation. Interviewees exited the interview after being allowed to ask questions or voice any concerns that they had. The follow up procedures involved member checking which was having participants check the summary of data findings for accuracy of interpretation, and to inform interviewees that if I need clarification when I listened to the recording, I would call or

email them based on their preferred means of contact. I did not need to call any

participant after the interview process was complete.

Data Analysis Plan

Analyzing data involved the researcher reflecting on the essential information to

answer the research questions and facilitate meaningful conclusions (Saldaña, 2016). The

types of answers that a researcher gets depend on the questions that they pose (See

Cohen, 2016). At the end of the interview process, I used first and second-cycle coding

(Ravitch & Carl, 2016) to process the research data from interviews for patterns and then

categorize the patterns to generate themes. Each participant's response was aligned with a

specific research question in a separate coding analysis (Saldaña, 2016).

The coding process entailed two phases. Saldaña (2016) stated that there is no

best method of coding, and because each research project is unique, the coding method

chosen depends on the nature of the specific research study. Saldaña further suggested

that the coding method should align with the conceptual framework. I employed first and

second cycle coding. In the first cycle of coding, I planned to use In Vivo, in the initial

coding method, to acquaint myself with the language perspective and worldview of each

participant. The purpose of the first cycle coding was to analyze respondents' answers to

the interview questions, align them with the research questions, and draw valid

conclusions. In the second coding cycle, I used the eclectic coding method to refine my

first cycle codes, and then pattern coding to categorize my coded data for initial analysis

(Saldaña, 2016).

Once I analyzed the data from the second cycle coding, I looked for emerging themes among participants' responses about their perceptions of mandated curriculum and how it may influence their classroom management and instruction to generate new data about the concept (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The emerging ideas were coded and categorized based on the keywords in the research questions (Burkholder et al., 2016). I planned to share the summary of data findings with the participants to verify the validity of the information and to eliminate researcher bias. This method, known as member checking, adds credibility to the qualitative study by allowing participants to verify data with confirmation or denial for accuracy of their intended meanings (Candela, 2019; Creswell & Guetetrman, 2019). The software that I intended to use to help with the data management was Excel or Google Sheets for the coding cycles. I thought it would be hard to keep track of the data in the thematic analysis process without assistance from such software programs.

In qualitative research, discrepancies may inevitably arise that do not align with the trends and patterns that emerge (Patton, 2015). For example, one of the respondents may not perceive the adjustment to the mandated curriculum as a challenge, may not be experiencing classroom management issues, or may not have significant instructional challenges or issues with student achievement. This situation may be considered a discrepant case. Because there is no hypothesis to test, and I was not trying to make generalizations about the population of international teachers, I simply included the perceptions of each teacher and specify the ones that may have been different from the consensus of the group. This scenario may be considered a negative case, but Marshall

and Rossman (2006) stated that when a researcher can explain a negative case, it strengthens the theory and the logic for the conclusions that the researcher will draw from the data. Marshall and Rossman advised researchers to include the discrepant evidence and allow the reader to draw their conclusions. Discrepant cases were treated as valuable data to help understand the problem more deeply.

Trustworthiness

Credibility is the truthfulness of the research data that addresses complexities that may arise from patterns that may not be easily explainable (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). To establish credibility for this study, I plan to use member checking, peer review, and participant debriefing. After I analyzed the data, the participants received a summary of the data findings. This is one method of achieving validity. Member checking also improves the validity of research information and reduces the probability of research bias (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Expert peer-reviews can also ensure validity. I planned to ask an experienced doctoral graduate to check the information from findings against the research questions to see if the questions were designed to specifically answer the research questions (Cohen et al., 2007). I would need to examine my interview protocol from beginning to end for biases, closed-ended or leading questions, or any flaws in the research design (Saldaña, 2016).

Transferability or external validity is the degree to which the results of one study can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings (Burkholder et al., 2016). Ravitch and Carl (2016) assert that transferability allows for research findings to apply to different settings, contexts, and scenarios while still maintaining their specific context-

specific richness (p. 189). This research study was seeking to understand the lived

experiences of international teachers from developing countries about their adjustment to

mandated curriculum that may influence their classroom management and effective

instruction for student achievement. Other international teachers from developing

countries in a separate location may not have the same perceptions about their adjustment

experiences. The data may still be transferable from one school that employs

international teachers from developing countries to the next. Cohen et al. indicated that

qualitative research must be clear and detailed in the description so that others can make

their own decision about whether the findings from one piece of research can be

transferrable. To make transferability more possible, I provided a thick description of the

participants, their circumstances, and their responses.

Dependability is similar to the reliability of data and the extent to which the

reader can trust the information (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). An expert peer examined that the

data analysis section is free from researcher bias. Ravitch and Carl reiterated that a sound

research design is central to the dependability of research study findings.

Confirmability is the qualitative equivalent of the quantitative concept of

objectivity (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Because of the subjectivity of the qualitative research

process, the researcher cannot claim objectivity. Yet, the findings of the qualitative

research must be confirmable. I have already acknowledged that I came to the U.S. as a

teacher recruited by VIF (now Participate Learning) 16 years ago. Also, I experienced

challenges with classroom management and instruction in my first two years in the U.S.

classroom. For these reasons, I established the reflexivity of my position as a researcher.

Reflexivity is a systematic assessment of my positionality, subjectivity, and identity within the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). When I was interviewing the participants, I remained in the role of a researcher and I did not insert my opinions, share my experience, or interject any interpretation of the participants' responses. When analyzing the data, I based my interpretation on the transcripts alone. My opinion or personal experience did not factor into the data analysis or reporting of findings. Since I was only using open-ended questions and one data collection instrument, the possibility of triangulation did not exist. I constantly reviewed my research design for any evidence of bias and removed them before publishing findings (Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). Additionally, an expert peer examined the data analysis section to make sure it was free from researcher bias.

Ethical Procedures

Scientific research requires the establishment of ethical procedures that protect the participants' rights and maintain the integrity of the research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Historically, researchers have abused their privileges. In several cases, researchers have become intrusive, abusive, and predatory upon marginalized and vulnerable populations. Institutions such as Walden University have put measures in place to protect participant's rights. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Ethical Standards in Research protects the participants from harm and respects their rights (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Based on information from my committee chair, my proposal has to go through Walden's IRB for review of my research design, my interview protocol, and consent forms. Walden's IRB has to ensure the confidentiality and protection of data from the

participants before the data collection process can begin. I communicated the IRB approval number to the participants in the informed consent letter. Providing the IRB approval number infirmed the participants that my research was approved by the IRB.

Additionally, before each interview began, I read from a script that reminded participants that their inclusion in the study was voluntary and that they had the option to withdraw or refuse to answer questions at any time without repercussions. Participants were not identified by name, school, and country of origin, gender, subject taught, or years in the U.S classroom. The setting of the study was kept confidential and referred to as a rural school district in South Carolina. Participants were given an alpha-numeric identifier such as IT-1(international teacher 1), and (International Teacher 15) IT-15 throughout the research study. In compliance with the requirements of Walden University's IRB, I stored all the identifying information regarding the participants on my password-protected computer. I will also follow Walden's IRB's requirement that scholar-practitioners store research data for 5 years and then destroy it.

Because this study was collecting information about teachers' perceptions, I recognized that teachers may become uncomfortable sharing their experiences that may be embarrassing. In this case, I reminded respondents that my role is not judgmental, but to understand their experience. I would also inject appropriate and tasteful humor to lighten the moment. Also, respondents may be reluctant to share their experiences about interactions with administrators or other staff to identify their colleagues by name. I informed participants that they do not have to name any personnel directly in their interactions but could use pseudonyms or a generalized identifying term such as

Administrator One or Administrator Two. Since I did not work at the local site for the study, and did not know the names of the administrators, I would not know who they were talking about anyway. I reminded participants that my research was for personal advancement purposes, so their responses would not be used in any way against them. I was not obligated to share the information with any supervisor or district personnel. They can challenge anything that I have placed in my report and make suggestions for more accurately representing their perceptions. At the end of the data analysis process, I gave participants and the school district a summary of data findings.

Summary

In chapter 3, I gave a detailed description of the methodology for my research study. I provided information regarding the research design, research questions, participant selection, site selection, and a rationale for the research tradition. I gave a clear explanation of my role as a researcher and outlined what procedures I would follow to identify, reduce or eliminate possible researcher bias. In addition, I provided detailed descriptions of my instrumentation and the appropriateness of my choice of instrument. I detailed my data collection method and my data analysis plan. I addressed issues of trustworthiness with specific reference to credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I also addressed ethical concerns to ensure that participants were respected and safe from any potential harm. Chapter 4 will report research findings and include a summary of the data that I collected, the data analysis process including conclusions drawn, and evidence of trustworthiness.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research study was to explore the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries on their adjustment to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The following research questions were developed to carry out the investigation:

RQ1.   What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in the southern United States regarding the challenges that they face when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the United States?

RQ2.   What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in the southern United States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on classroom management practices?

RQ3.   What are perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less challenging?

In this chapter, I present a description of the setting for the study, the data collection process, data analysis, results, evidence of trustworthiness, and a summary.

Setting

The study site was a rural school district in a southern state that employs a diverse faculty, including international teachers from developing countries. The diversity is not

just evident in the teaching and support staff, but also the student population. The school

district is situated close to an Air Force base. Many students are from military families

that have lived in different states and countries. At the time of the study, there was a

global pandemic that impacted the instructional dynamics for at least 2 school years. The

school district moved between offering strictly virtual, hybrid, and face-to-face

instruction to facilitate the changing stipulations of the CDC. For the purpose of

observing the CDC protocols and to adhere to the district guidelines for safety, the

participants had the option to participate in the interview by video call on Skype, Google

Meet, or Zoom, or by phone.

Data Collection

The data collected came from 15 international teachers who taught in various

middle and high schools in the school district. I conducted six video interviews and nine

interviews by phone. The participant demographics are outlined in Table 1. The

interviews were conducted virtually through video and phone calls and audio recorded on

a Philips Voice Tracer. I accommodated the participants by holding the interviews at the

times most convenient to them. Participants had the choice to conduct the interview in

their homes or at a private location of their choice while I stayed in a private room in my

own home. All interviews were done outside of school hours. The interview process

spanned 3 weeks, 2 of which were during the Christmas holidays. The teachers who

responded wanted their interviews out of the way before school resumed. By the end of

the second week, I had already interviewed 12 teachers, and I completed the data

collection process by the end of December.

Table 1

Participant Demographics Table

Participant	Home country	Grade level	Years taught	Subject taught	Recruiting agency	Mode of interview
IT-1	Jamaica	Middle	8	ELA	EPI	Phone
IT-2	Columbia	High	15	Spanish	FACES	Video
IT-3	Jamaica	High	14	Biology	EPI	Video
IT-4	Kenya	High	16	ELA	FACES	Phone
IT-5	Jamaica	Middle	22	ELA	EPI	Video
IT-6	Jamaica	High	9	Math	Participate Learning and EPI	Phone
IT-7	Jamaica	High	6 + 4	Math	EPI	Phone
IT-8	Jamaica	High	10 +	Social Studies	FACES	Phone
IT-9	Jamaica	Middle	8	Science	Participate Learning	Video
IT-10	Jamaica	High	9	English	EPI	Phone
IT-11	Jamaica	High	22	English	EPI	Phone
IT-12	Philippines	High	1	ELA	FACES	Video
IT-13	Columbia	High	4	Spanish	FACES	Video
IT-14	Kenya	High	16	Math	FACES	Phone
IT-15	Philippines	High	13	Biology	EPI/FACES	Phone

Data Analysis

I used the 6-step thematic analysis approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2014) to generate the themes from the codes. The six steps are to familiarize oneself with the data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review themes, define and name themes, and produce the report.

Phase 1: Familiarizing Oneself With the Data

The first step was to familiarize myself with the data. During the interview, I audio recorded the conversation and took notes of statements that resonated with the research questions and purpose as well as words, phrases, and statements that were repeated throughout all the interviews. I transcribed the audio to text using the Otter.ai software and Google Voice typing tool. I then listened to the audio while reading the text

to make sure that the words on the transcript and audio aligned. Before assigning any codes, I read through the data set as a whole to become familiar with the thoughts and perceptions of the participants.

Phase 2: Assigning Codes

I then proceeded to do open coding by reading through each transcript again and underling, annotating, and making notes on the words that were repeated. I started the coding process by assigning open codes to the data set by chunking the text of the transcripts and then assigning labels to the text. To decide on what was a code, I reflected on the first step of the process and checked my notes to identify the repeated words, phrases, and ideas that emerged from the data set.

After reading through the data set and creating a list of initial ideas about the content of the data, I began Phase 2 of the data analysis process. I read each transcript though again and labeled the sections according to the main idea of what the participant was saying. In Phase 2, I kept the research questions in mind as I coded to start envisioning the themes that I saw emerging about the data and the meaning that participants gave to the major phenomenon in the research questions. I coded my data by writing notes on the sides of the pages, highlighting the text, drawing arrows to make connections, writing questions, and mentally matching the responses to others that I had read. I wrote on scratch paper and drew a table to organize my codes and patterns. Then I went back through each transcript and coded each research question to see if the themes that I had begun to identify were in any way answering the interview questions. I

eliminated some codes as irrelevant because they did not provide answers to the

interview questions. Table 2 shows a sample of the coding that I did with the data.

Table 2

Examples of Open Coding

Excerpt	Participant	Coded for
So, we were we, we were asked to follow the pacing guide. And like, say, we got 3 days to do a particular topic. Some of the issues I had was that I think that, you know, it could not be covered in the 3 days, like more time was needed.	IT-7	More time Following pacing guide
And then there's also the time constraints. Like, for example, you just have to do the bell work for this amount of time, the I-do process, this amount of time that we do you process, it will total. Sometimes it will depend on the type of class that you have, or the type of students that you have.	IT-8	Time constraints Type of class
When you are aligning the pacing guide the contents with the curriculum, you realize that the contents are based mostly on grammar and vocabulary, whereas the content part of the curriculum is based on the skills. So, making that connection makes things more challenging, because what they should have done is not to build up the curriculum upon a pacing guide, but build the curriculum upon the skills that the students need to achieve.	IT-13	Alignment Student needs
Because sometimes, in all honesty, sometimes, like, for example, we're doing the you-do process. And then it takes a long time to finish the you-do or the review process. Because of the type of students that I have. They're learning abilities. They're learning how they learn. They're multiple intelligences and all that stuff. So that's what I find that challenging.	IT-12	Learning abilities Multiple intelligences
Okay, so as a high school teacher, you find that the district and the school still try to dictate how you go about conducting your lessons. And I found that practices such as I have been having the students start out in the same way every day. Personally, were counterproductive for me.	IT-9	Counterproductive Need variation
Some of the challenges where they did not have the resources. The resources were not there. Yeah. One of the major issues was lack of resources.	IT-1	Lack of resources

The approach that I took was data driven as opposed to theory driven. Although I was doing some amount of a priori coding, the major approach was to generate the themes using the inductive approach based on the data that I was analyzing. In that way, I felt that my conclusions would be more valid and a more accurate representation of what the participants said.

I then began the process of using axial coding to classify the codes into categories to see what connections and relationships existed among the codes. I especially looked for patterns that I saw emerging from the entire data set where multiple participants appeared to have the same perceptions of a phenomenon and the research questions. I also created several theme charts to see the patterns and trends that emerged as I coded the data. Table 3 shows an example of how I classified the codes into categories by interview questions using axial coding.
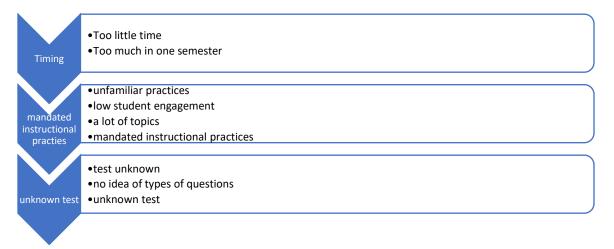
Table 3

Examples of Axial Coding Categories

Code	Category	Participant	Excerpt
Understanding the standards	Standards	IT-1	I think one of the greatest challenges was trying to understand the standards that are not taught how to deconstruct the standards.
		IT-7	The greatest challenge for me was to understand the content that what is it that I am supposed to teach? It was it was there. But it needed to be unpacked. So just looking at the curriculum, it was it wasn't. I would say it wasn't. I couldn't easily figure out okay, what are the duties just looking at the standard.
Standards are too general	Standards	IT-2	I think if you read the standards that we use, actually—these standards were updated in 2019 and the standards are too general you know it is not like. I think it can be a bit more ehm my thinking in the background of the students the population we are managing here in South Carolina.
Scope and sequence	Curriculum	IT-5	Ok, understanding the standards and scope and sequence of the mandated curriculum. There was so much to be covered in so little time. And in some cases, it the lack of a structured curriculum.
Curriculum challenges	Resources	IT-12	The challenge the challenges I faced in a use the curriculum was, first and foremost, I had to find out where I can get a genuine mandated curriculum.
Pacing too fast	Student needs	IT-9	The pacing guide, on the other hand, if I would include it in my discussion because it seems to me as if the speed at which we go took precedence over the student's ability to learn at a certain rate.
Expectations too high	Students' needs	IT-5	They (expectations) look really good on paper and the ehm and maybe those people who developed them may think yeah this is good for this certain group of students. But not with our students. Because if you have a class of nonreaders and you are giving them silent reading, what are they reading? And you have a class of nonreaders and you are giving texts that are above their reading level and their grade level, what are they reading, what are they comprehending? That's been a struggle.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

Phase 3 of the thematic analysis process was to identify patterns and emerging themes in the categories. I reviewed the procedures suggested by Bree and Gallagher (2016) and used a Google Sheet to organize my data into codes, categories, and themes. I reviewed each category based on the research questions and the elements of the conceptual framework. I coded the data manually and sorted them into categories based on the commonalities. The process was not linear. There had to be sorting and shuffling, and even eliminating of initial codes that did not fit. I created several thematic maps to build connections between and across categories. Figure 3 shows an example of a thematic map for sorting the data and generating themes.

Figure 1

Sample Thematic Map

Timing	• Too little time • Too much in one semester
mandated instructional practies	• unfamiliar practices • low student engagement • a lot of topics • mandated instructional practices
unknown test	• test unknown • no idea of types of questions • unknown test

Theme
Mandated instructional practices and time constraints prevented teachers from adequately preparing students for an unknown standardized test.

Phase 4: Review of Themes

I did two levels of reviewing the themes in this phase. First, I reviewed the initial themes that I had generated based on the research questions. I went back through each transcript by each interview question and reviewed the excerpts again to see if the themes that I had generated were relevant to the research questions. I had to revise the codes and categories for relevance and alignment. Then, I reviewed the themes and collated them to create meaningful concepts and theories about the research questions. The process involved revising the themes, shuffling extracts, and reevaluating the gist of the participants' responses. I looked at the themes not just as individual ideas, but also in relation to the data set as a whole to see how the themes worked (Braun & Clarke, 2014). I also coded additional data from the transcripts that might fit into the potential themes.

Phase 5: Refining and Naming Themes

In the end, I generated seven themes from the data set to answer the research questions. There were three themes for Research Questions 1 and 2 and two for Research Question 3. I selected the excerpts that aligned with the selected themes and then reviewed the data one more time to make sure that the conclusions were valid and based on the data. I used Google Sheets to collate and map the data by showing the codes, categories, themes, participants, and excerpts based on the research questions. Table 4 shows the breakdown of the themes by research questions as derived from the categories.

Table 4

Theme Alignment With Research Questions

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in the southern United States regarding the challenges that they face when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the United States?

Themes	Categories
Challenges unpacking standards, understanding unfamiliar curriculum, and lack of access to resources prevented teachers from meeting students' needs.	Standards Curriculum Students' needs
While mandated instructional practices facilitated order, the inflexibility stifled teacher creativity and hindered authentic learning experiences.	Order Creativity Flexibility Lacks authenticity
Mandated instructional practices and time constraints prevented teachers from adequately preparing students with learning deficits for an unknown standardized test.	Learning deficits Unknown test Time constraints Mandated
Majority of the teachers felt that they had more autonomy in their home country than the United States regarding how they taught their classes.	Less freedom in the United States More freedom in home country

Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in the Southern United States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on classroom management practices?

Themes	Categories
Teachers were challenged by instructional issues, student readiness, and cultural differences.	Instructional issues Student readiness Cultural differences
The teachers felt that effective classroom management is based on mutually respectful relationships, the quality of instruction, and support for teachers.	Support Instructional quality Relationships
Adjustment to classroom management differences between the two countries was based on administrative responses, legal and cultural issues.	Culture Legal issues Administrative responses

Research Question 3: What are perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less challenging?

Themes	Categories
Teachers need training in unfamiliar technology and cultural practices that will prepare them to meet the needs of diverse students.	Technology Culture Special needs students
Administrators can provide enough time to adjust and create a community to help teachers adjust to the new job.	Time to adjust Support Mentorship

Phase 6: The Results

In this phase I did a final review of the themes to make sure they aligned with the codes and categories. I also did a thorough review of the themes to verify relevance with the research questions. I determined that there was no conflicting information in the data set and so no further data analysis was necessary. I confirmed that nine themes that I got from the data analysis adequately represented the data and answered the three research questions about the perception of teachers on their adjustments to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement.

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The Results

</div>

I examined teachers' perspectives on their adjustment to mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the U.S. that influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. I used a basic qualitative design using semi-structured interviews. This section describes the results after analyzing responses from 15 participants. I designed 13 open ended questions administered in an interview protocol to answer the three research questions (see Appendix A). I used the interview as the data collection instrument to gain a deep understanding of teachers' lived experiences with their adjustment to teaching in the U.S. With the careful administration of the interview protocol which included strategic probing questions, teachers provided deep, in-depth descriptions and thorough elaborations in their responses. The following is a summary based on the research questions that I designed the study to answer. The section is organized by discussing the relevant themes I deduced below each research question.

Research Question 1

What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in the southern U.S. regarding the challenges they face when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the U.S.? The question asked teachers to share their experiences with adjusting to mandated curriculum in the U.S. In analyzing data, I deduced four themes that answered the research question.

Theme 1: Difficulty Unpacking Standards, Understanding the Unfamiliar Curriculum, and Lack of Access to Resources Prevented Teachers From Meeting Students' Needs

Several teachers expressed that they had experienced various challenges adjusting to the mandated curriculum. The challenges ranged from difficulty unpacking or understanding the curriculum and the standards; as well as learning unfamiliar content to navigating the pacing guide. The teachers felt that the challenges made it difficult for them to meet the learning needs of the students and this resulted in frustration for both teachers and students. The teachers described the mandated curriculum as too much, too general, and too vague. IT-2 stated that, "The standards are too open for the people who actually we are working with. That's what I think; it is too general." IT-3 voiced a similar concern by saying:

> As a new teacher using the curriculum mandated by the state the curriculum was too long, the curriculum was too much. It did not break down the topics that were user friendly or specific to what students wanted to learn, or specific to what they needed students to learn.

The issue of a generalized curriculum was also highlighted by IT-7 who declared that

The greatest challenge for me was to understand the content that I am supposed to

teach? It was it was there but it needed to be unpacked. So just looking at the

curriculum, it wasn't. I would say it wasn't um I couldn't easily figure out okay,

what I needed just looking at the standard. So of course, I had to get help and

guidance. That was the greatest challenge.

Several other teachers alluded to the complexity of the curriculum and the challenges

they had with clearly understanding what they were expected to teach. IT-8 and IT-14

cited unfamiliar content as another challenge. IT-8 referenced unfamiliar courses that

were included in their curriculum: "I was not familiar with these courses. And so, I as a

new teacher had to start by adjusting to these new and unfamiliar courses, and I was just

thrust into it." IT-14 mentioned:

The number one was the curriculum Oh, is it a bit different from where I'm

coming from? Yes, we have to teach almost the same but not exactly. So, what

I'm supposed to be teaching in one grade here is totally different from what I was

teaching in the same grade in my country. So that was some challenge in

adjusting what to do.

The curriculum's scope and sequence were not the only challenge that the

teachers faced. Five teachers shared that they had difficulty accessing textbooks,

standards, and even the curriculum itself. IT-1 asserted that, "One of the major issues was

lack of resources." IT-7 expressed the challenge by saying, "And one of the other

challenges I had was I was accustomed to using a textbook as reference for the students

when I got here and did not have that." IT-10 stated that, "The curriculum was never

given to me" and IT-12 said they questioned where they could "find a genuine mandated curriculum." IT-15 declared that they were using a curriculum from another state because of the lack of a curriculum for the subject area:

> Now, that's where the challenge lies, because I am used to being given a curriculum. And then now I just have defined a program or curriculum that will fit the demand of the school. So currently, the program that I'm using is coming from Georgia, a mix between curriculum curricula from Georgia and Tennessee. And I have to come up with my own program using both curricula from two different states, so that's where the challenge is now.

The challenges with curriculum, unfamiliar content and lack of resources, including curriculum, made it difficult for teachers to meet the needs of students. The teachers also referred to the curriculum as being difficult, unrealistic, and unproductive. IT-1, IT- 4, IT -5, IT-9 and IT-11 expressed the challenges they faced with the disconnection among the demands of the curriculum, pacing guide and the students' learning needs. IT-1 said, "It does not work," while IT- 4 said, "It does not fit." IT-5 described a scenario where the requirements did align with the students' abilities:

> They look really good on paper and the ehm and maybe those people who developed them may think yeah this is good for this certain group of students. But not with our students. Because if you have a class of non-readers and you are giving them silent reading, what are they reading? And you have a class of non-readers and you are giving texts that are above their reading level and their grade

level, what are they reading, what are they comprehending? That's been a

struggle.

The teachers made it clear that the students' needs were their major concern. IT-11 described the feeling this way:

I didn't feel like I was able to be flexible in terms of giving students what they needed. I felt restricted to a curriculum that was primarily geared towards end of course testing, in my case. And, so, I felt like I was kind of, you know, trying to get my lesson structure towards that, but not being able to give students what they really needed, in terms of their English needs.

IT-1 summed up the perceptions of the teachers by saying, "I know the students I have in front of me. You know it just isn't working as they think it will work."

Theme 2: While Mandated Instructional Practices Facilitated Order, the Inflexibility Stifled Teacher Creativity and Hindered Authentic Learning Experiences

There were divergent views on the influence of mandated instructional practices on the teachers' adjustment to the U.S. classroom. Three teachers cited that the requirements of the mandated instructional practices and pacing facilitated order and made adjustment to the U.S. classroom easier for them, while 12 of 15 teachers shared that mandated curriculum restricted teachers' creativity and negatively influenced students' learning. The codes from the question were no flexibility, teaching not natural, strict timing, technology, alignment, and no teacher creativity, lack of student engagement, academic frustration, unfamiliar instructional strategies, and pacing guide and settling students. I categorized these codes into four categories namely creativity,

authentic teaching, counterproductive, and alignment. In many cases, the same teacher commented on the various codes that I assigned to the transcripts.

At least three international teachers whom I interviewed had positive views on the instructional practices. Three teachers attested that the mandated instructional practices helped with settling the students especially at the beginning of the lesson. IT-2 like the "warm up" or "bell work" idea to have students on task as soon as they enter the classroom. IT- 4 liked the pacing guide because "I can say that pacing guide, it kind of helped me to know what I'm supposed to teach." IT-14 shared that they liked the instructional practices because, "It's orderly and they can see some thought process…it graduates from one point to the other ..." The teachers said the order was good for helping with classroom management and student behavior.

In addition to the positive perception, the challenging aspects were also highlighted. IT-1 and IT- 6 shared experiences about the inflexibility of the instructional practices. IT-1 felt that the school leaders "just wanted to make sure that we are using the program, it does not matter what challenges we faced." IT- 6 used the analogy that there are "many ways to skin a cat. So, there are many ways to get the same outcome." IT-8 mentioned "rigid elements" in the instructional practices and IT- 4 categorized the practices as not fitting English as an arts-based subject because they were too "scientific." The participant identified the rigid mandates as stifling creativity. IT- 8 described the expectations of the mandates as "stripping off your creative juices." IT-2, who is a Spanish teacher, felt that the instructional practices robbed teachers of the ability to teach language in a natural way. The participant uttered that "I cannot teach a second language

in the way I am supposed to be teaching, I have to align my teaching to the South Carolina 4.0. So that was kind of challenging." IT- 4 stated that:

> Somehow it kind of makes learning to be kind of … you know it follows a kind of scheme that is difficult to put in the arts. The arts require a lot of creativity. So, if you have conditioned children as to exactly what you want their answer to look like, then you kind of interfere with their creativity because to them they will just do it the way you want them to do it and you don't give them room for any kind of creativity at all.

In addition to creating order and stifling creativity, the teachers felt that the strict timing of the pacing guide and misalignment with the students' academic abilities hindered authentic learning experiences. The general consensus among the teachers was that the pacing of lessons from one topic to the other was moving too fast for the students to grasp concepts. IT-5 described them as "textbook practices that looked good on paper." The participant expressed that, "They don't necessarily translate to much when you do it with the students and also felt that "the expectations did not match up" with students' abilities. IT- 9 agreed that the practices were unrealistic. The participant affirmed that, "I found that practices such as having the students start out in the same way every day personally were counterproductive for me." In response to the question about adjustment to the instructional practices, IT-13 criticized the construction of the curriculum stating that, "What they should have done is not to build up the curriculum upon a pacing guide, but build the curriculum upon the skills that the students need to achieve."

Theme 3: Unfamiliar Mandated Instructional Practices and Time Constraints Prevented Teachers From Adequately Preparing Students With Learning Deficits for an Unknown Standardized Test

The time frame for preparing the students for an unknown standardized test was compounded by the students' learning deficits. The codes that I used to deduce the theme included learning deficit, unknown test, no past questions, timing, too pacing, student below grade level, no foundation, disconnect, unfamiliar practices, and student readiness. I categorized the codes as unknown tests, learning deficit, timing and unfamiliar practices. Nine teachers gave responses on their challenges with preparing students for standardized tests.

The teachers highlighted that the unknown test made it difficult to prepare students because they were accustomed to having past questions and former test to help them. IT-14 voiced that, "You don't have access to the former tests that have been there or the previous tests that have been there." IT-7 agreed that, "They knew all the standards but when it came down to the testing, noy much information was given so I can better prepare students for the test." A similar sentiment was echoed by IT-4 who shared that, "You should at least know what a question looks like for me to tell students how to respond to it. Now, without that knowledge it becomes a bit problematic to guide students." The learning styles of students presented a challenge for teachers as well as alluded to by IT-12. Both IT- 8 and IT-11 felt that since they had to spend time becoming familiar with instructional practices, the students with peculiar learning needs were at a disadvantage. IT-8 said it like this:

> I think a lot of this strategies worked based on culture. But a lot of a lot of the time, it was not ideal. It didn't work for me, especially because I didn't receive much instruction or, or training towards doing all of this at that time being a new teacher.

The teachers believed that the challenge became a balancing act with learning new strategies required by the curriculum and preparing students for the test. IT-11 voiced that:

> The curriculum mandated means that I had to teach specific things within a specific period. And trying to be able to balance that, in addition to using those instructional practices that the district mandated, was difficult, because as I said before, I didn't know some of them. It took me some time to get accustomed to using them. And so, trying to balance both and get the kids prepared at same time to try to adjust to what the district is requiring. It was a bit difficult at the outset.

The other aspect of the challenge the teachers faced with preparing students for standardized tests was the time frame in which the teachers had to prepare the test. The school district usually scheduled one 18-week semester to teach the content for the test. As stated by several participants, the time they were given to prepare the students did not seem enough. IT-3 declared that, "The curriculum was very long plus you had only one semester to prepare students." The participant continued that it was hard to put everything together to make sure that students were ready for these standardized tests since it was a lot of work, a lot of topics to learn." IT-11 agreed that it was "a lot to cover" and IT-5

mentioned that, "There was so much to cover in such little time." The participant continued:

> I guess the challenge would really be the timeframe in which they would like for you to impart certain content to the students, you know, without giving ample time for reinforcement and practice. So, I guess that's where the challenge comes in with that the pace at which they want you to go was to follow these mandated pacing guides, irrespective if the majority of the students understood the concept or not.

In summary, the teachers agreed that the time was too short, they had no idea of the test they were preparing students for, and learning unfamiliar strategies and practices made the adjustment more challenging.

Theme 4: Majority of the Teachers Felt That They Had More Autonomy in Their Home Country Than the U.S. Regarding How They Taught Their Classes

All but two participants expressed the lack of autonomy they perceive in the U.S. classroom. IT-10, IT-11, and IT-15 claimed that the level of autonomy was similar in both educational settings. IT-15 stated, "So in general, it's just about the same." IT-11 said, "Same here and in Jamaica, so you felt like you were kind of just confined, restricted. So, I'm not seeing much of a difference, so to speak." And IT-10 voiced that:

> So just like when I was in Jamaica, I had autonomy, we had a curriculum to follow, it was given to us. But as teachers were able to do it the way we saw fit. In other words, we're able to use our own strategies to bring forth that lesson. And

likewise, I do have that now. So, it's just, it's just as comfortable for me here,

make it work for me back home in Jamaica.

The participants were the anomaly to the general trend of the responses where all others had detailed explanations about the marked differences that exist between their experiences in both countries. The codes I generated for the excerpts were more freedom in the U.S, control in home country, no flexibility in the U.S., no teacher input and powerlessness, micromanagement, more coaching in the U.S., no autonomy, cannot modify and adjust anything. I had just two categories for the codes which I named: more freedom in home country and less control in the U.S.

When describing the level of autonomy that teachers have in their home country teachers generally felt that they had more control of their classes in their home country. The participants used language such as "having full control," (IT-5) "freedom to decide on what I am going to teach my students," (IT-1) "the teacher is in control" (IT-14) "there is more leeway," (IT-8) and "free to make my own decisions" (IT-1). Other participants gave more details on their experience with autonomy in their home countries. IT-1 revealed that:

Okay, in my home country I had the freedom to decide on what I'm going to teach my students. Had to follow the curriculum, yes, but I could decide which resources I'm gonna use, what books I'm gonna use. I didn't have anyone coming in to micromanage what I'm doing with the kids.

The concept of being able to make adjustments was not peculiar to IT-1. IT-8 agreed with the assessment of autonomy and stated,

As I said, from bell-work to the exit ticket, I had more opportunity to teach the

class the way that I wanted to adjust it how I wanted wherever I saw fit, the

students' learning needs, right. Uhm I was able to make more suggestions, I had

more room to apply…personality and to apply my strategies and to blend it with

the students' learning.

Teachers also felt that they had an input in how they taught their classes as pointed out by

IT-4 who said, "As the teacher of a certain subject, you are kind of left to… you know

you have the autonomy to teach that subject the best way you know how." Teachers

appreciated being able to make changes to benefit their students. IT-3 shared that:

For example, teaching the curriculum, in my country I could change it up and

teach what I thought was best for the kids to learn first, but here I have to go step

by step in a specific order because we have benchmarks and other related tests

that are related to how you teach the curriculum.

Based on the excerpts, teachers experienced more control over their classes in their home

countries.

In contrast to the autonomy the teachers described in their home countries, they

generally felt that they were "micromanaged" (IT-1) and confined to "the way they do it

in the States" (IT-5). IT-4 elaborated that the decisions were made by administrators who

did not teach the subject. The participant stated:

In the US, the autonomy does not really belong to the teacher but it is the

administrator who has to decide how you are to teach what you are to teach.

Cause then I have heard administrators who are not even teachers of English are

telling me how I am supposed to teach English.

A similar sentiment was shared by IT-8 who also noted a lack of teacher input in the

instructional decisions made regarding their classes. The participant said:

So, there's more leeway in Jamaica, but less leeway here. That would be my

biggest comparison. You don't get much of what we say, in how we teach really,

they tell us what to do. And we have to try and design it the best way that we can

and not and still fall in line with their mandates.

Students' needs emerged as a concern among the teachers who highlighted that following

mandates did not always meet students' needs. IT-8 voiced that they wanted room to

"apply my personality and my strategies to blend with student learning," and IT-1

declared that in the U.S., they "have to follow mandates even if they do not meet the

needs of my students." There was a feeling that teachers' "hands were tied" (IT-9) and

they felt "powerless because there are so many things that you cannot do and you have no

control" (IT-14). One reason teachers felt compelled to stick to the mandates is they did

not want to fail their evaluations. The view was expressed by IT-8 who related:

I'm just given the mandated curriculum. And I feel like I have to stick to it or else

you know, or else I fail, especially when it comes around to evaluation. So, I

believe I have more autonomy while teaching in Jamaica than I do have here.

The level of autonomy in the U.S. compared to what they experienced in their home

countries made teachers feel powerless in their ability to make adjustments to the

instruction to meet peculiar needs of their students.

Research Question 2

What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in the southern U.S. on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on effective classroom management practices? The second research question was designed to find out how the international teachers felt about the influence of the mandates on the way they managed their classrooms. From the data set, I generated three themes to answer the research question.

Theme 5: The International Teachers Felt That Mandated Curriculum Influenced
Classroom Management in Relation to Instructional Issues, Student Readiness, and
Cultural Differences

After analyzing the excerpts, I assigned the following codes to the excerpts: instructional issues, pacing guide, engagement, boredom, too difficult for students, students unprepared, inclusion teacher preparation, frustration, below grade level, work ethic, and student socialization. From these codes, I created three categories namely: instructional issues, student readiness, and cultural difference. Teachers identified instructional issues they faced with implementing mandated curriculum that made a difference in their ability to manage their classes. The factors included strict timing of the pacing guide, failure to engage students, curriculum below students' grade level and expectations may be too high for the level of the students' abilities.

Teachers expressed having difficulty managing a classroom where there was a mix of abilities causing frustration for the students at either end of the learning spectrum. IT-4 voiced that, "Sometimes I have students that have IEPs in terms of you know they

are low achievers and so I need to be moving slower for these other students. So that is too much for one teacher to handle in one class." Teachers felt that autonomy over the classroom would help with handling behavior issues that arose as a result of the teacher following the strict mandates that may cause students to be unsettled. IT-10 noted that:

> So, if the teacher had autonomy over that classroom, he or she may find something else that worked better. So, he might, or she may decide that, okay, today, we're not doing collaborative work at all, we're just going to have students focus on their own activities separately. And that way, the teacher would be able to quell away whatever issues may be going on in the classroom, as opposed to always following something that is mandated that is clearly not working.

Another instructional issue that the teacher mentioned was using practices that were clearly not effective in achieving intended learning outcomes. IT-5 stated that the practices were and "flowery" and elaborated that:

> They look good. You know you have guided reading and you have kids working in groups and all of that but if they are not equipped to manage their time and can-do things on their own and be independent learners, then you still have some issues.

The demands of the mandated curriculum shifted teachers' focus from managing classes to understanding and implementing the expectations. IT-3 revealed the challenges by saying, "Sometimes you are so focused on trying to complete the curriculum that sometimes classroom management issues slip past you and you are not able to deal with those." The issues that the teachers cited were mainly having to do with them having to

do what was expected. Having control over the instructional decision would help with effective classroom management.

Participants perceived that students' attitudes towards learning played a role in their ability to manage their classroom effectively. The frustration students felt because they may be performing below grade level or their general work ethic made a difference in the classroom atmosphere. IT-1 declared that, "It is a frustrating time and it is also frustrating me and it is also frustrating for the students because they are sensitive enough to know exactly what is going on. You know it is frustrating to them and it can be demotivating to them." Students who knew they were low performers would disrupt classes. IT-9 felt that, "If a student did not understand then their next activity is going to be something to disrupt the class." IT-5 shared the same perception, "If you are teaching and they don't understand, you are gonna have problems with discipline." Teachers agreed that if the students did not feel any connection to the instruction, they would become disruptive.

In addition to instructional issues and student attitudes the cultural differences made it difficult for the teachers to both administer the mandates and manage behavior simultaneously. The teachers expressed that student behavior based on their socialization made it hard to carry out their jobs. One international believed it was the way students are socialized in the U.S. IT-9 who is a science teacher shared her experience with students who would not cooperate with the expectations of the lesson. The participant stated, "So you're expected to have students who can at least sit down, follow the instructions that you're given for a lab and get the lab done. But they can't follow simple instructions

because they've not been socialized to do so." IT-2 shared a similar experience that they were surprised that students did not respond to the presence of the teacher when they were misbehaving. The participant said:

> It is so different, I am gonna give you an example about a strategy we use in our country. When you arrive on a drive to the classroom with 30-thirty something students. You arrive and obviously we are human beings, we socialize, we talk. So, when you arrive in a classroom you definitely see kids talking. But when you are in front of the class and you are quiet this is the strategy, just don't say nothing, just stay in front of the class without saying one word. After a couple minutes thy realize the teacher is there and they will stop and say hey, hey, Mr. IT-2 is there, the teacher is there whatever, and they start telling other students to be quiet. When I came here, I tried to do that strategy and I was part of the world, like there was nobody there.

The difference in how students behave based on their socialization was one cultural challenge the teachers faced when managing their classes.

Not all teachers agreed that there was a connection between mandated practices and classroom management. Three teachers, IT-1, IT-11, and IT-15 did not see any connection between the two variables. IT-1 expressed that, "It doesn't affect it because I believe if you know how to control your class, no matter what the admin says, no matter what is given to you, you should still be able to maintain order." IT-5 said, "I don't see a lot of effects of the mandated curriculum with the classroom management. I think

classroom management stands on its own, and the mandated curriculum all stands on its

own."

Theme 6: The Teachers Felt That Effective Classroom Management Is Based on

Mutually Respectful Relationships, the Quality of Instruction, and Support for

Teachers

The general perception among the teachers was that establishing relationships

with their students was vital to effective classroom management. Eight participants

identified the value of relationships. Teachers felt that trust, mutual respect,

understanding what the students need and creating bonds made a difference in how

students responded to the teachers' expectations. The participants identified the

importance of establishing positive relationships as vital in obtaining effective classroom

management. The relationships must be based on knowing the students, engendering

trust, and ensuring mutual respect. The relationship made it easier for students to meet the

expectations of the teacher and so that the instructional process would not be disrupted.

IT-1 emphasized that, "You need to know the students that you are teaching." IT-10

suggested that teachers "pay attention to them, and also ask about their games or just

have conversations with them to build that kind of rapport," and IT-15 noted that, "Being

able to get the trust of the students that the teachers really care about them, then they will

listen to you and they will follow whatever you want them to do in the classroom."

While knowing the students and building trust, mutual respect for each other's

cultures also assisted in creating the classroom environment conducive to effective

instruction. The response from IT-2 summarized the concept of respect, "You need to

show them a lot of respect that you respect their culture, their beliefs and in the same way

you respect them they're going to respect you." For IT-8, it was not just about building

the relationship with the students, but creating a bond. The participant elaborated:

> Another factor number three, is creating a bond with the students, you have to
>
> learn to appreciate them for who they are, do investigation, conduct investigation,
>
> not anything formal you know, not just through questioning, not teaching on the
>
> first day or the first two days, but using those days to get to know them, because
>
> when students realize that you're interested in, in, in who they are outside of the
>
> classroom, then they will work better for you as well.

The international teachers perceived that the trust, bonding, and respect created with

students in the U.S. made it easier for them to manage their classes and implement

mandated curriculum and instructional practices for student achievement.

Another factor identified by the teachers was support. The category was divided

into two categories: support from parents and support from administrators. Four

international teachers felt that parental involvement makes classroom management more

effective. IT-1 declared, "You have to have parental involvement." IT-7 agreed with the

need for parents to be involved to help diffuse any potential conflicts and stated, "Having

parents involved in the classroom with the teacher will allow you to be better able to help

the students in case there is a problem and the parents will understand." Teachers also

believed the needed support from administrators to effectively manage classes.

Administrators could provide support through "professional development for teachers,

especially new teachers who are coming from a completely different background." (IT-3)

reiterated that a teacher is lucky "if you are in a school with strong administrators who believe in their teachers that they have and want them to succeed" (IT-6). It -10 agreed that the support of administrators will prevent students from seeing teachers as weak links" whom they can walk over.

Theme 7: Adjustment to Classroom Management Differences Between Home Country and the United States Were Based on Administrative Responses as well as Legal and Cultural Issues

The teachers held the belief that the major differences in classroom management practices between home countries and the U.S. were based on the responses of administrators. Parents in developing countries are not as litigious as the parents in the U.S. so there is little threat of legal ramifications if teachers make innocent mistakes. IT-1 stated that administrators "micromanage" because "they are afraid of being sued." A similar view was shared by IT-8 who noted that teacher shelled back from giving students physical displays of caring because of the laws:

> Also, sometimes a little touching can help to calm a student and help with the classroom management, you know, like, you know, in an affectionate way or in an affectionate way are showing them certain interest, you know, spending time with them in the classroom. But here you have to be very mindful of those things because it can get you into trouble' probably in lawsuits even.

Teachers claim to be timid to administer the type of discipline they felt would benefit the students and assert respect for the teacher but the administrators stood in the way. IT- 4

revealed that in their home country teachers did not interact directly with parents so they were "shielded from the parents" and contrasted that:

> In the US, you realize that a teacher is directly involved with the parent. And I think sometimes that's why things go wrong because, the same parents that seem to be cursing at you, still expect you to teach their child without thinking about how the parent cursed at you.

The discipline process came up for criticism as being "much stricter here" (IT-14). The difference in the discipline systems presented a challenge for teachers in their adjustment. For IT-15, "The big difference is actually the discipline of the students," while for IT-7, the problem was that there appeared to be no consequences:

> I feel like here students are babies in my home country discipline is handled differently in terms of if you do something wrong, you misbehave in class then even as much as an apology in front of the entire class, but here that is not done. I feel like you know the students they misbehave but at the end of the day they can come back in the classroom and you have to sit there and teach them. So, I would say that the rules are different.

IT-3 who mentioned that the process of administering consequences was often delayed because of the many steps towards getting administrators to act. The participant said:

> If at home the student misbehaves or says something disrespectful, you can punish that student in the classroom or send them outside to stand or something. Here, in the US you are not able to do that. The first procedure you have to write

them up or give them a referral. It has to go through several administrators before

anything is really done to that student.

Delayed consequences made it hard teachers to feel that administrators were taking

discipline seriously and gave the impression that students were getting away with

misbehavior.

The major differences posited by the international teachers from developing

countries related to cultural issues. Teachers identified, language barriers, student rights

and liberties, and socialization. For IT-6, "The way a student speaks to teachers, their

tone and the things they say, you know, but then again, as a teacher, I know it is a cultural

difference." IT-10 noted that in their home country, "It is not typical of the classroom that

students use expletives," and went on to elaborate that, "The students feel entitled and the

entitlement allowed them to feel that power, that they're more powerful than the teacher."

The sentiment of IT-5 was that, "Discipline back home was far, far greater." Participants

of the way students are raised in the U.S. According to IT-12, "The difference may be the

culture because we, we have different culture. The kids are raised differently here." The

difference in socialization between the children in the U.S. and the participant home

countries was described by IT-8:

Classroom management in my home country is very different from here. Like I've

been saying, students are socialized differently. And we are up in my home

country. Students are socialized from the age of 3 or 4 years. So, they are

socialized from the age of 3 or 4 years to come to school to learn. Whereas here,

they're socialized. From a young age, I don't know what school is for them. I don't

know what the purpose is. And so, classroom management is totally different.

Socialization of children in the U.S. was not the only factor teachers identified as a major

difference between students in their home countries and the U.S. The Participants

mentioned that their attitude to education and teachers were different as well. IT-13 said

that, "Teachers are seen as having no knowledge and just as one who provides activities

to keep students busy." IT-15 felt that students were "disrespectful to school staff in

general. They believe they are all grown and they know everything they need to know."

The legal issues, administrative responses to discipline issues and the difference in

culture regarding student socialization made it more challenging for teachers to maintain

effective classroom management.

Research Question 3

What are perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what

international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less

challenging? The research question was designed to ascertain the teachers' beliefs about

the needs of international teachers when they arrive in the U.S. The teachers itemized

several needs that were both personal, professional, psychological, and social. I generated

two themes for this research question. Theme 1 focuses on the professional needs while

theme 2 focuses on the social needs.

Theme 8: Teachers Need Training in Unfamiliar Technology and Cultural Practices

That Will Prepare Them to Meet the Needs of Diverse Students

The types of training that teachers identified a need for were many and varied.

Thirteen of the 15 participants made recommendations of needed training based on what

they received when they arrived in the U.S. or what they felt they needed to make the

adjustment to mandated curriculum and instructional practices less challenging. I decided

on the following codes for the excerpts in the data set: unfamiliar learning systems,

technology, unfamiliar software, culture shock, cultural differences, handling discipline,

instructional practices, team meetings, cross cultural training, microaggressions, IEP

students, behavior issues, student learning needs. I classified the codes under the

categories of technology, cultural differences, and diverse learners. The following is an

analysis of the excerpts that relate to the theme.

Firstly, teachers identified the need for training in using unfamiliar technology.

Participants mentioned that there was a heavy reliance on technology for instruction that

warranted them being trained in various skills that would make instruction more effective

to help the students. Technology was highlighted as a challenge teachers faced when

making the adjustment to mandated curriculum and here teachers mentioned training in

technology as a need. IT-15's response was that:

> When I started working in the United States, I mentioned to you that one of the
>
> things that I learned best is technology. And up to now I'm going to say the same
>
> thing. It's still about technology. So, the use of technology has helped me a lot in

implementing the mandated program or curriculum and doing instructional

approaches the best way possible.

The participant was not the only one who felt the need for technology training. IT-12 felt

that the technology training they received when they came to the U.S. helped them with,

"the instructional practices, because I can have different options." The software was the

main need that the teachers had. As stated by IT-3 said, "Professional development that I

think that had helped me was learning the different software, how to use this different

software in the classroom." IT-11 agreed with the need for training in unfamiliar

software. The participant shared that, "Training on the technology that, you know, is

needed to get the lessons across." IT-10 listed examples of the software that teachers

needed:

> The strategies are the software, for example, that some of us when we just got
>
> here, we don't know how to use many of these things. We don't use Google
>
> Classroom in our schools before, or may not have used a Nearpod or any of those
>
> other platforms and of those other devices or, or software.

With more hands-on training using software the teachers agreed they would be better able

to match the digital competence of the students whom IT-1 described as being "born in

the century of technology."

Another training the teachers felt was needed to help international teachers adjust

to mandated curriculum and instructional practices is cross cultural training to help them

bridge the gap between their culture and American cultural practices. Several teachers

identified the lack of training as the reason they experienced "culture shock" (IT-5). IT-1

saw the cultural awareness training as a necessary ingredient in "reaching" the students.

The participant stated, "I think it is important to know about the culture of the people you

intend to teach. Important to know about their culture: one so that you don't make

mistakes and two, you are able to reach them. Until you're able to reach them so you

can't teach them. So, yeah, I think it is important." The participants mentioned the need

for U.S. administrators to validate their professional expertise. IT-10 described the

international teachers as "professionals in their own right who were not here because they

were desperate for a job." Sharing their cultures involved an "exchange of instructional

practices" (IT-12). The comment from IT-3 captured the essence of the teachers'

responses about their need for training. In addition, the participant said that:

> Alright, I think that it would be a good thing to get training with cross-cultural
>
> training because that would help you to be better equipped to go inside the
>
> classroom here in the US and to be able to manage all the challenges or the new
>
> things that will arise within the classroom that you are not used to.

The comments from IT-6 about "cultural adjustment" and IT-8 about the "enlightenment"

stressed the positive influence of providing relevant training that addresses cultural

differences will make them as effective in the U.S. as they were in their home countries.

Training is needed to prepare the teachers to meet the unfamiliar needs of their

students. The concept of IEP and special needs is not familiar to the teachers from

developing countries where there are usually separate facilities for students with

disabilities. The participants mentioned the demands of an inclusive learning

environment as a challenge to providing instruction. IT-8 spoke about the IEP students:

I mean, I know inclusion is something that we have been practicing all over the

world now. But I think it really shocked me how much of an inclusion it would be

when I came here. Because I'm, like, for example, I think international teachers

would achieve amazing results, if they had more training on how to work with

students with certain learning disabilities that we have to encounter here.

Another participant shared the need for training regarding the various learning needs that

may be new to the teachers. IT-15 noted that the training would help them "adjust myself

to the needs of my students, learning them, help me to adjust my way of thinking, the

paradigm, my mindset, and be ready for what's coming to me."

Theme 9: Administrators Can Provide Enough Time to Adjust and Create a Supportive

Community to Help Teachers Adjust to the Expectations of the New Job

In addition to the need for training in handling professional challenges, the

teachers mentioned needs on a more personal level that would help with their social

adjustment. I appropriated the following codes to the participants' responses. Time to

adjust, time to adjust to culture, time to practice, time to socialize, meeting with peers,

timely feedback, socializing with administrators, learning each other's culture. Listen.

Socialize, and international teacher mentors, and modeling. After examining the codes, I

created the categories of time to adjust and community.

The participants generally felt that more preparation was needed for them to make

a more successful adjustment to the new teaching environment. The culture shock

experience was described in several ways. IT- 8 felt they were just "thrust into it," and

IT- 9 described the experience of not getting enough preparation by stating that, "You go

in there blindfolded." IT-5 agreed with IT-8 that, "You are just thrown into something." IT- 8 also cautioned against the practice where administrators "throw us in the classroom and assume we know everything." What the teachers needed most was time to adjust. Five teachers mentioned the need for more time to adjust before facing the challenges of the new job. IT- 4 asked for "progressive training" in place of giving all the new information at the beginning of the school year." IT-10 stated, "Professional development is very useful. But we also need time to be able to use all of these things that we've learned… and put the knowledge to practice." A similar sentiment was shared by IT-7:

> It's just that there is difficulty when you go there you go to the workshops, but when you come back, you do not. I do not get time to actually practice what I have learned. So that is what I would say. So, the training was there, I had enough opportunity to be trained, but not enough time to come back and actually practice that in the classroom.

With some more time to adjust the teachers would have felt more confident in their ability to manage their new task.

Teachers from developing countries claimed that they would benefit from a supportive community that included international teacher-mentors, administrators, and their peers. Several teachers mentioned the need for more support from mentors in unraveling the standards and understanding the instructional processes. Specific mention was made of "international teacher mentors" by IT-7, IT-8, and IT-14. The participants all agreed that since an international teacher had already been through the same challenges, they were able to empathize better than U.S. mentors and help the teachers

feel that they could be as successful. IT-8 cited that, "International teachers would appreciate their own getting support from their own" and IT-14 reiterated the idea that, "Somebody who has faced a problem like us is better placed than someone who's not coming from places where you're coming from." All seven participants who spoke on the need for mentors felt that mentors are helpful with providing guidance and in modeling the expectations in the classroom, and prevent them from "stumbling in the dark" (IT-1).

Participants shared that international teacher from developing countries need support from administrators to complement what they receive from their mentors. They want administrators to "listen to us" (IT-13). To understand what they needed. IT-13 questioned further: So, who do you prefer to listen to: a teacher who has been reading books and hearing the American system all the time? Or a teacher who's coming from a different culture and is facing that multiculturality in the classroom?" The consensus was that as professionals the international teachers wanted their expertise validated by having a voice in the decisions that affected them. The teachers also want administrators to make provisions for more informal interactions with their peers so they could vent and compare experiences towards supporting each other (IT-8). IT-8 further suggested a "buddy system" where we can get one-on-one support." The data set also revealed that teachers wanted to observe another teacher to learn the teaching process (IT-14) and "team up with other teachers who are experts in the field" alluding to what IT-8 suggested about international teacher mentors.

Discrepant Cases

The majority of teachers agreed with each other on the challenges they faced with adjustment. However, there were three of the 15 teachers who believed that the level of autonomy was the same, and two of 15 teachers who thought that the mandated curriculum and instructional practices did not influence effective classroom management. If I should single out a participant as having views outside of the trends of the data set, it was IT-15 because the participant had three responses that did not align with the rest of the data set. The information presented a contrast to the way the other teachers saw their experiences and added richness to the narrative about international teacher adjustment of mandated curriculum and instructional practices. Most of IT-13's responses were aligned with the questions so his responses were not included in the analysis except for the question about factors that influence effective classroom management. The respondent kept misinterpreting the questions, and even with probing did not provide any data that helped with the analysis.

As mentioned earlier, three discrepant cases where the participants' responses diverted from the general trend of the data set. Two of 15 participants stated that they did not have an issue with the mandated curriculum. In response to interview questions one and two. Both IT-6 and IT-15 did not agree that the mandated curriculum presented any challenges. IT-6 stated that, "I like to practice what I am learning and see for myself, how it impacts my students' performance and their academic ability and see their growth so then next to minimal challenges for me. Next to none I should say." IT-15 also expressed

that they did not face any challenges with adjustment to the mandated curriculum or

instructional challenges:

>I cannot really see a lot of great challenges with regard to the curriculum, because
>
>I believe that the curriculum in the United States is very similar to the curriculum
>
>in our country, the Philippines, there are a few things that are added or omitted,
>
>but other than that, since I already know my curriculum, even before, it's not
>
>really a great challenge for me to implement the curriculum, the program of South
>
>Carolina.

Another case of discrepancy was regarding the interview questions 6 and 7 that

asked about the influence of mandated curriculum on classroom management. Again, two

of the 15 teachers had a different perspective. Whereas the majority of participants named

several ways in which the mandated curriculum had negative influences, IT-1 shared that,

"It doesn't affect it. Cause I believe if you know how to control your class, no matter

what the admin says, no matter what is given to you, you should." IT-15 also stated, "I

think classroom management stands on its own, and the mandated curriculum all stands

on its own."

The final case of discrepancy was the responses to question 6 that asked teachers

to compare the levels of autonomy in the Us with their home countries. IT-7 and 15

stated that there was no significant difference in the levels of autonomy that they

experienced in both educational settings. IT-7 did not perceive a difference in the levels

of autonomy either. Although several participants named lack of creativity as an

indication of low autonomy, IT-7 voiced that:

My experience wasn't different. I do feel like I had autonomy here, just the same as I had that in, in my home College, in my home country. You know, I had no problem being creative, both here and abroad, where I'm from, as long as you are following the standards under the curriculum. So, I did not see much difference. That was my experience.

IT-15 said, "I think it's just about the same between the two countries." The participant, who was specific in describing the similarity declared, "I do not think that I do not have a voice."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I described several ways to achieve credibility for the research findings that I followed through after analyzing the data in chapter 3. First, I planned to carry out member checking where all participants checked the data for accuracy of interpretation. Once the data analysis had been approved, each participant received a summary of data findings by email that they checked for accuracy of interpretation. The next step was to ask an experienced doctoral graduate to check my results against the research questions to ascertain that the questions were specifically designed to answer the research questions.

Transferability, or external validity is the degree to which the results of the study can be generalized or transferred to other settings. To achieve transferability, I designed the interview protocol to delve into the lived experiences of participants and I provided a thick description of their responses in the results section of the paper. The data revealed the perceptions of the international teachers from developing countries regarding their

experiences with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the U.S. Although the respondents were mostly from one developing country, the results are still valid because the sample of the study largely matches the population of the international teachers in the Southern State. Still, the views reflected in the results may not accurately reflect the reception of all international teachers from developing countries in the U.S.

Dependability refers to how reliable the data from the study and whether the study can be replicated with similar results. This can be achieved by providing a detailed description of the research process and procedures (Lodico et.al, 2006). For this study, I provided a detailed description of the research design and implementation, participants, the interview protocol and the plan for analyzing data (see Saldaña, 2016). All the participants met the selection criteria and the information they provided was relevant to the research purpose and questions. The peer review process confirmed that the information in the data set was trustworthy because there was no irrelevant information.

Confirmability refers to the objectivity of the research findings or the truthfulness of the results. I had to examine my position in relation to the research and establish my reflexivity. Reflexivity is a systematic assessment of my positionality, subjectivity, and identity within the research study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Although I shared similar experiences as many of the respondents, I did not engage in conversation to share stories, or reveal that I was also an international teacher from a developing country. The teachers may have inferred but there was no space to discuss. The data were analyzed using only participants' recorded excerpts. The conclusions I drew were based on what the

participant revealed in their interviews. The published findings were free of researcher bias.

Summary

The nine themes that I generated from the data set adequately answered the three research questions. In answering the first research question regarding the challenges teachers faced with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices, participants revealed that the teachers faced challenges with unpacking standards, understanding curriculum and access to resources. They also had difficulties with the instructional practices. Although a few teachers felt that the practices facilitated order and structure, the rigid expectations hindered creativity and made learning less organic. The short time frame and the curriculum constraints made it exigent to successfully prepare students for standardized tests, especially the ones with learning deficits. One obstacle that teachers faced was having less autonomy in the U.S. than in their home country which made it difficult to meet student individual learning needs.

The second research question asked teachers to share perceptions about the influence of mandated curriculum on classroom management. Several teachers felt there was no connection while others voiced that strict adherence to rigid practices made classroom management more tough. Effective classroom management is based on relationships, student attitudes, and support from administration. Managing a classroom in the home country because there was more autonomy, less litigiousness, and positive relationships.

Research question 3 asked about the needs of international teachers when they come to the U.S. Teachers itemized that they needed mentorship especially from international teachers who are successful to learn the instructional practices in the U.S. and to get familiar with the mandated curriculum. In addition, they voiced the need for a caring supportive community, and some means of socializing with others.

Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of the research findings as well as a discussion and the limitations of the study. The chapter will provide recommendations for further research and implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This basic qualitative study explored the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on their adjustment to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement. The research regarding the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices does not include the voice of international teachers. In this study, I sought to include the voices of international teachers in the body of knowledge on mandated curriculum and instructional practices. The findings revealed that international teachers from developing countries face difficulties understanding mandated curriculum, unpacking standards, and accessing resources. These challenges created a barrier to teachers' ability to meet the needs of students. Although the unfamiliar instructional practices added structure and created order, the rigidity of the practices made the learning experience lack authenticity and creativity. Teachers felt that the mandated curriculum and time constraints prevented them from equally preparing students for an unknown test.

These international teachers believed that they needed support from parents and administrators to help with classroom management. Teachers also shared that classroom management depends on relationships, mutual respect, and cultural differences. Teachers stated that they would benefit from training about unpacking the standards, implementing unfamiliar instructional practices, using technology, and building cross-cultural awareness. Teachers believed that the support of administrators, mentors (especially international teacher mentors), and a caring community would help in making the

adjustment process less challenging. Teachers felt that in the community, they would be able to vent, exchange their cultures, and get validation as experts.

Interpretation of Findings

The interpretation of the findings from this qualitative study was determined after analyzing the data from the 15 semi structured interviews. The SDT posited by Deci and Ryan (2008, 2017) formed the conceptual lens through which I interpreted the responses of the teachers about their perceptions of their experiences adjusting to the U.S. learning environment. I structured the interpretations of the findings based on their relationship with the research questions.

The first four themes relate to RQ1 (What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in a rural school district in the southern U.S. regarding the challenges when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the United States?). The next three themes are connected to RQ2 (What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in the southern United States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on effective instructional delivery and classroom management practices?). The final two themes are related to RQ3 (What are perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less challenging?).

Theme 1

The first theme generated for RQ1 was that difficulty unpacking standards, understanding the unfamiliar curriculum, and accessing resources prevented teachers

from meeting students' needs. The teachers expressed that they were unfamiliar with the curriculum and had trouble accessing the standards (IT-1; IT-3), pacing guides (IT-8), and technological software (IT-15) that they needed. They also mentioned the scope and sequence of the curriculum as being too broad (IT-2) and open (IT-5). The teachers referred to the curriculum as being difficult, unrealistic, and unproductive (IT-1; IT-4; IT-5). The teachers also said, "It does not work" (IT-1). The teachers' difficulty in accessing the needed resources made it more challenging for them to carry out effective instructions that would meet the needs of their new students (IT-7; IT-15). Ospina and Median (2020) asserted that international teachers are highly qualified professionals, and Serbes (2017) pointed out that international teachers generally migrate to the U.S. to develop, among other skills, efficiency and effectiveness. The findings reflected in this theme support the perspective of Seah (2017) and Shehi (2017) that adjusting to the differences between the two educational systems is a challenging process for international teachers.

Theme 2

While mandated instructional practices facilitated order, the inflexibility stifled teacher creativity and hindered authentic learning experiences. A few teachers shared that the structured nature of the instructional practices expected by the school and district made it easier to settle students, especially at the beginning of the lesson, with warm-up and bell work (IT-2) and provided a sort of structured pacing for the progression of the lesson (IT-14). There was nothing in the literature about the benefits of the mandated curriculum in terms of creating structure. Edger (2019) stated that mandated curriculum

stifles constructivism and represses teacher and student creativity. The participants in my

research mentioned that following the mandated curriculum stifled both teacher and

student creativity (IT-4; IT-8). The teachers' responses echoed the idea of Myers (2019)

that there should be allowance for teachers to negotiate the scripted curriculum to support

student success by becoming "transgressive teachers." IT-8's response alluded to the

inflexibility by mentioning that the mandates "stripped off creative juices." Teachers are

often faced with the choice of disregarding the curriculum mandates and doing what is

best for the students (IT-4; IT-9). Teachers categorized mandated instructional practices

as unrealistic and counterproductive (IT-9; IT-5). It is possible that marrying the two

worlds of mandated curriculum and teachers' choice may be the way forward to creating

a meaningful learning experience for all students (Ahmed, 2019). The notion of the value

of authenticity was supported by Cheon et al. (2020), who stated that teachers do not feel

validated when they have to follow mandates that are void of their input. Marshik et al.

(2019) and Akram (2019) agreed that authenticity facilitates autonomy, congruence, and

genuineness that positively influence student achievement.

Theme 3

Unfamiliar mandated instructional practices and time constraints prevented

teachers from adequately preparing students with learning deficits for an unknown

standardized test. Teachers proclaimed that they are put in a challenging situation with

preparing students for a test that they have never seen or ever will see while they adjust to

unfamiliar instructional practices (IT- 4; IT-7). The participants mentioned having limited

time to prepare students, especially the ones who had learning disabilities, had varying

learning styles (IT-12), and were reading below grade level (IT-5). Students with peculiar learning needs were at a distinct disadvantage (IT-8). McCarthey and Woodard (2018) found that mandated curriculum raised expectations of teachers and created more stress for both students and teachers. The stress of adhering to the mandated requirements that did not align with the needs of the students added to the challenges that the teachers faced (IT-1). The time constraints were another area that challenged the teachers; IT-5, IT-3, and IT-11 mentioned that there was a lot of content to cover in one semester to prepare students who were sometimes not performing at grade level. The teachers agreed that the time was too short to adequately prepare students. Another issue with the standardized test was the fact that the questions were unknown. Teachers had no idea of the structure, content, or type of questions (IT-4; IT-7). McCarthey and Woddard indicated that policies and administrative expectations influenced how teachers did their jobs, and Delaney et al. (2018) noted that teaching for standardized testing usually resulted in ineffective instructional practices that did not meet students' needs.

Theme 4

The majority of the teachers felt that they had more autonomy in their home country than in the U.S. regarding how they taught their classes. Not having autonomy negatively influenced the teachers' ability to make decisions that they felt would have better served the students; they were afraid to make such decisions for various reasons (IT-10; IT-11; IT-15). The teachers voiced that they felt confined and restricted in the U.S. in contrast to the freedom that teachers experienced in their home countries. IT-4 alluded to the ability to make adjustments to the requirements based on their professional

discretion. The majority of teachers made mentioned more freedom, more leeway, and more autonomy in their home countries (IT-1; IT-8; IT-14). In contrast, the teachers said that they felt powerless because their hands were tied (IT-9) in the U.S. My review of the literature did not include any data indicating that teachers perceived mandates in a positive light. Day (2019) challenged the view that many see following mandates as "good teaching" and contended that good teaching is not based on mandates but on teachers taking charge and doing what is best for the students they have. The data from the transcripts were consistent with the research of Kieffer and Pennington (2020), Serbes (2017), and Roth (2014), who found that autonomy provides empowerment and facilitates teachers making mistakes and learning from them. This theme is also consistent with research by Maravillas (2021), who noted that autonomy is part of the professional identity of international teachers, while Poole (2020) noted that teachers do not want to be stereotyped. The concept of self-efficacy as a form of intrinsic motivation resounded in the responses of the teachers, who wanted to assert themselves as professionals in their own right, as also found by Erss (2018).

Theme 5

The international teachers felt that mandated curriculum influenced classroom management concerning instructional issues, student readiness, and cultural differences. Attempts to manage classes were thwarted by challenges with instructing students who were below grade level or had special learning needs (IT-5). Additionally, the teachers faced challenges with differences in culture that prevented them from creating a settled classroom environment (IT-2; IT-15). The control teachers have over their instruction

may make a difference in their classroom management effectiveness (IT-10). Eren (2020)

supported the idea of giving teachers ownership of instructional decisions, and Choi and

Mao (2021) proposed the notion of self-directed teachers having higher self-esteem and

being able to practice reflection to improve their practice. The theme is consistent with

the research presented in the literature review that supports teachers having more power

over instructional choices that will lessen challenges. In addition, several teachers

mentioned students being below grade level, being unprepared, or having learning

disabilities. IT-10 posited that having more autonomy over instructional decisions was in

the best interest of students, especially those with special needs. Nagro et al. (2018)

suggested that teachers must engage in proactive planning to offset the challenges with

classroom management that resulted from instructional issues, and Hepburn et al. (2020)

agreed that instructional preparedness was a preventative classroom management

strategy. The study corroborates ideas about the use of evidence-based strategies for

inclusive classrooms (Sobeck & Reister, 2020).

Cultural issues also posed a challenge to classroom management. Teachers cited

issues with language, student socialization, permissive behaviors, and general

disconnection of cultures when attempting to discipline students (IT-9; IT-14; IT-15). In

my literature review, I presented the views of Gaias et al. (2019), who posited that

cultural responsiveness enriches the classroom environment. The theme is consistent with

the idea that mutual respect should be practiced through learning students' names and

navigating through different communication styles and temperaments (Robison, 2020).

Robison postulated that teachers must confront their personal biases to build mutual

respect in a diverse setting. Several researchers have presented possible solutions to handle the challenges faced with cultural confrontation. Warren (2018) suggested intercultural education and practicing empathy to understand students better, while Little et al. (2019) encouraged practicing reflection as a means of gaining students' cooperation.

Theme 6

The international teachers in the research study related that effective classroom management is based on mutually respectful relationships, the quality of instruction, and support for teachers. Several of the teachers had a clear idea of what constituted effective classroom management, with the majority naming relationships and respect as the number one factor (IT-1; IT-2; IT- 8; IT- 9). The participants cited parental support as another important factor in effective classroom management (IT-4; IT-3; IT-7), and they indicated the importance of having administrative support to gain the respect and cooperation of students (IT-3; IT-6; IT-10). Brown et al. (2020) confirmed that international teachers know what effective classroom management looks like. However, because it is a new learning environment in an entirely different culture, the teachers may not be able to transfer the same skills and effectively manage classes. The reality of the non- transferability of teachers' skills necessitates cross-cultural training to bridge the gap (Dalal et al., 2020; Nagro et al., 2018) and align the "pedagogical mismatch" (Brown et al., 2010; Kombe, 2017) to effectively instruct students for academic success. In the review of literature for this study, I presented the ideas of Salazar (2013) and Freeman et al. (2020) about using humanizing pedagogy to help educate the whole person. The

humanizing approach also encourages building strong relationships between teachers and students to positively influence student learning outcomes (Salazar, 2013). Participants in this study named administrative support as a factor influencing effective classroom management. SDT, which was the conceptual framework for my study, suggests that teachers want to feel competent to perform at their best (see Ryan & Ryan, 2007, 2018). Teachers felt that having administrative support made a difference in the way that students responded to their discipline strategies. Brown et al. (2019) proposed that international teachers know what constitutes effective classroom management. However, Petts (2020) and Ozturgut (2017) shared the view that they may need cross-cultural training to help them adjust to the new instructional environment and serve the diverse student population in the U.S.

Theme 7

Adjustment to classroom management differences between the home country and the U.S. was based on administrative responses, legal issues, and cultural issues. The previous themes specified the need for administrative support, which is different from administrative responses, as the focus of this theme. The participants in the study mentioned micromanaging (IT-9), delayed consequences (IT-4), the fear of legal consequences (IT-8), and the difference in the way that students are socialized as the challenges that they faced with adjustment (IT-5). Although the discipline system was much stricter here in the U.S. (IT-14), the students' behaviors were challenging to the teachers (IT-9). Although there is no mention in my literature review about fear of legal issues, teachers felt that the litigious nature of the American educational system prevents

teachers from building strong relationships with students (IT-1). The cultural issues that the participants described are parallel to the experiences of the teachers in a study by Dunn (2016), who stated that the teachers felt like aliens while the students felt that their teachers were out of touch with the reality of who the students were. IT-12 pointed out that kids are raised differently in the U.S. Tomlinson (2019) agreed with the teachers that classroom management in the U.S. was based on relationships. Carter (2020) suggested that teachers receive training in global competency, and Nagro et al. supported the teachers' views that classroom management difficulties are caused by difficulties with adjusting to an unfamiliar system. As Wingrove et al. (2020) pointed out, teachers want to feel capable of what they are doing.

Theme 8

Teachers need training in unfamiliar technology and cultural practices that will prepare them to meet the needs of diverse students. The findings of the research study revealed that teachers needed technology training to maneuver the new software and digital platforms that are necessary for instruction (IT-15; IT-12). IT-11 and IT-3 identified training on unfamiliar software as one of the needs. Brown et al. (2019), however, explained that international teachers are already competent in technology and did not need training. The findings of my study are different from Brown et al.'s (2020) ideas and suggest that teachers do need technical training to help them adjust. One of the participants specified that because the U.S. educational system relies heavily on technology, new international teachers may not have all the skills required to carry out their jobs (IT-14). Dalal et al. (2021) said that international teachers are efficient in using

technology when they arrive in the U.S. That idea is not consistent with what the teachers

said in this study. All 15 teachers agreed that they needed training cross-cultural training

to make the adjustment to the U.S. classroom less challenging. The teachers specified that

the training would reduce culture shock (IT-5; IT-13; IT-9) and make them better

prepared for their new teaching assignments. IT-1 thought that the training would enable

them to "reach" the students, IT-3 mentioned the exchange of instructional practices

between teachers from both countries to enrich each other's experiences, and IT-10 said

that the training would validate the international teachers as experts. Teachers expressed

the need for training in providing instruction to students with disabilities, especially those

with an IEP (IT-4). The idea of providing such training was supported by the scholars in

my review of the literature. Scholars mentioned in the literature review supported the idea

of providing cross-cultural and culturally responsive training to improve classroom

management and instructional practices (Baker, 2020; Dalal et al., 2021; Nagro et al.,

2018). Schulleri and Saleh (2020) and Kombe (2017) both made suggestions about the

concept of providing culturally relevant training that will help teachers interact

successfully with students across cultures and establish a classroom environment that

facilitates effective instruction.

Theme 9

Administrators can provide enough time to adjust and create a supportive

community to help teachers adjust to the expectations of the new job. They need time to

learn the culture, adjust to the setting, learn the strategies and see how the system worked

before entering the classroom was highlighted by the majority of the teachers in the

research study. Participants felt they were unprepared for the job, blindsided about expectations, and stopped short of saying they felt cheated out of the ability to meet the challenges because their recruiter was not honest with them (IT- 9). IT-8's notion of being "thrust into it" and IT-9's description of going in blindfolded and IT-1's idea of stumbling in the dark echoed the need for an adjustment period (IT-11; IT- 6; IT-3). Participants also cited the need for a caring community to help them adjust. They need administrators to listen (IT-13) and IT- 8's conception of a buddy system made it clear that support was an important component in the adjustment process. Teachers declared their need for a caring community comprised of administrators, mentors, successful international teacher alumnae, and their peers that would provide an outlet and a support system to help them through challenging adjustment periods. Kinkead-Clark's (2018) study predicated the need for mentorship and support as a factor in what made Caribbean teachers successful and want to remain in the profession. Shehi (2017) agreed that although the international teachers are professional in their own right, the teachers will need mentorship and support to adjust to their new work environment. Mustin (2021) added the need for strong emotional support for new international teachers. While O'Hara et al. (2020) shared the view about the need for mentors, Baer (2020) specified choosing a mentor that respects cultural differences. Several participants in this study were selective about the need for international teacher mentors to help because they felt the international mentor should empathize with them and be more open about the challenges they were facing with adjustment (IT-7; IT- 8; IT-14). The theme is consistent with the research mentioned in the literature review about what type of support new international teachers need to adjust.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the research study was the SDT proposed by Deci and Ryan (2008, 2019). The framework posits that when individuals are given autonomy, relatedness, and competence they will perform at their best. The cognitive-evaluation theory strand of SDT rests on the idea that individuals are intrinsically motivated when they have decision-making power, connection to the task, and they feel capable (Carr, 2020; Wingrove, et al., 2020; Sheldon & Prentice, 2017). Self -determination theory proposes that the psychological needs of individuals are universal, making them relevant to all peoples and cultures (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000).

Theme 1 highlighted the challenges teachers face with unpacking standards, understanding curriculum, and meeting students' needs. This challenge is related to the teachers' feeling of competence which will help them do better at their jobs. Working without a clear understanding of the expectations for the job may cause feelings of inadequacy (IT-9). Theme 2 indicated that the teachers' struggle to implement unfamiliar instructional strategies made them feel inflexible and stifled their creativity. The third theme about the teachers' challenges with teaching unprepared students for an unknown test adds to the concept of feeling inadequate. As IT- 4 and IT-14 pointed out, they are not used to preparing for attest that they have no idea about. Theme 4 indicated that the international teachers felt they had more autonomy in their home countries than in the U.S. The language used with autonomy included words like "powerless", "less leeway" and "hands are tied" (IT- 4; IT- 5; IT- 9). The international teachers are coming from an autonomy-supportive environment where they had control of their classrooms (IT- 4; IT-

1). The idea is supported by Kinkead - Clark who conducted a study of teachers in the Caribbean and found that autonomy was identified as one of the top five factors that made veteran teachers feel competent and remain in the profession. The themes under RQ1 are reflected SDT in the conceptual framework. The self -determination theory posits the need for autonomy as one of the tenets that make teachers perform at their best (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2007). Based on the SDT, in addition to needing autonomy to perform at their jobs, teachers need to feel competent to perform at their best (Deci & Ryan, 2018). The theme confirms that autonomy was an important part of the teacher's ability to do their jobs in their hm countries. In grounding autonomy in the SDT, Ryan and Ryan, and Van Den Broeck et al. (2016) stated that giving teachers autonomy may stimulate more authentic interactions and encourage genuineness that makes a teacher brings real life to the classroom. The SDT reinforces the positive effect of autonomy on self-worth and as intrinsic motivation that promotes quality performance (Wingrove et al., 2020). The SDT components of autonomy, competence, and relatedness are linked to the effectiveness of behaviors and performance in the workplace (Deci et al., 1989; Van Den Broeck et al., 2016).

For themes 5 through 7, the focus was on the challenge was with classroom management in the context of implementing a mandated curriculum. The teachers perceived that building mutually respectful relationships (IT-11), and getting support from administration and parents (IT- 4; IT-12) were important for effective classroom management. The teachers mentioned the cultural differences, legal (IT- 8) problems, and students' attitudes (IT- 9; IT-5; IT-14) as obstacles that hampered their ability to

effectively manage their classrooms. The SDT includes relatedness (Ryan & Ryan, 2019) as an important component. Relatedness is the feeling of belonging and attachment to other people. By stressing the value of relationships and support (IT -13, IT- 8), the international teachers are confirming the value of relatedness and masking connections with the students to feel competent in managing their classrooms as suggested by Carr (2020). The themes generated in response to RQ2 also mirror the ideas of the SDT, that teachers must feel valued by co-workers, who in this study are administrators, to give optimal performance on the job (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2007, 1985; Deci et al., 1989).

Themes 8 and 9 focused on the teachers' perceptions of what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to the mandated curriculum less challenging. Stating their need for training in technology instructional practices, and cross-cultural training, the teachers are sending a message about the importance of community (IT-13; IT- 8) or relatedness, relevant knowledge to inspire competence (IT-9), and the ability to make culturally responsiveness decisions. The teachers stressed that autonomy is necessary to do their jobs in the U.S. The findings of this research study on international teachers are congruent with the ideas of the cognitive evaluation strand of the SDT (Jones, 2014). The international teachers expressed that the lack of autonomy they are allowed in the U.S. (IT-5; IT-12; IT-2), the disconnection from their culture (IT-2; IT- 4), IT-11), and the feeling of inadequacy during the adjustment process (IT- 6, IT-14; IT-3) significantly influences their ability to carry out their jobs. Based on the tenets of the SDT, if the international teachers can feel the level of competence that they felt in

their home countries they may be able to be more effective teachers who influence higher levels of student achievement (Deci et al., 1989; Van Den Broeck, 2016).

Limitations of the Study

The nature of a basic qualitative study creates several limitations because of the humanistic focus. There is the issue of reflexivity, and subjectivity of interpreting findings. There is also the possibility of making hasty generalizations and unfounded assumptions that have no basis in research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). To address the matter of reflexivity, I based all my conclusions on the participant responses and, not my judgments, opinions, or experiences. I also established exclusion criteria for participants with whom I had a close relationship or who worked in my work setting. To address hasty generalizations and unfounded assumptions, I stayed in my role as researcher, did not engage in any sidebar conversations, and I adhered strictly to the interview protocol as approved by Walden's IRB.

In chapter 3, I stated that one of the limitations would be the sampling strategy. I carefully outlined the selection criteria in chapter 3. All participants would be selected based on having a J-1 Visa, from a developing country, and teaching a tested subject or a world language. There were no stipulations regarding how many participants would come from each category. The demographics for this for the participants show that there were eighty percent High School teachers and 20% middle School. Of the 15 teachers only three taught middle school. The limitation regarding types of school presents the likelihood that the perceptions of three middle school teachers may not represent the perceptions of the population of middle school teachers in the Southern state.

Another limitation regarding the participant demographics was that there were 60% Jamaican teachers and 40% teachers from other developing countries. Of the 15 participants eight were Jamaicans, two from Columbia, two from Kenya, and two from the Philippines. No teacher from India or Cameroon volunteered for the study. The limitation suggests that maybe the data mostly reflect the views of Jamaican teachers as not enough teachers from the other countries were represented in the sample. Also, there were no teachers from Cameroon, India, or Venezuela as anticipated at the outset and stated in chapters 1 and 3. The data findings do not reflect the perceptions of teachers from other countries.

Another limitation that was presented in my data collection was the interpretation of the interview questions. In sticking to the interview protocol, I found it challenging to get IT-13 to comprehend the question about autonomy. Most of the answers the participant gave were not relevant to the question I asked, or the purpose and scope of the research study. Even when I diverted slightly from the script, the participant still did not interpret the question as intended and kept telling me about students' inability to work independently of the teacher. For that reason, I chose not to include the responses from IT-13's transcript, except for research question 2 for the last research question about issues with classroom management. For RQ1 and RQ2, the participants saw interview questions 1 and 2, 6 and 7 as the same question because they had difficulties differentiating between a curriculum and an instructional practice.

Still, another limitation is that two of the participants had taught at previous school districts and two were on their second assignment in the U.S. so their recollection

of the initial adjustment experience was vague. Nonetheless, I included their responses in the data analysis as relevant to the study because there was still an adjustment process regardless of whether it was the first or second time coming to teach in the U.S. The information from participants who had taught at previous school districts was congruent with the data from the other participants and was not among the discrepant cases.

Recommendations

Since the research was conducted with teachers at various stages of their U.S. experience, so may not have a fresh recollection of their adjustment period. Further research is needed with first-time international teachers in their first or second year in the U.S. I believe that getting the information from the ones who are fresh in their country will give an authentic view of the adjustment process. Another area that can benefit from further exploration is to get input from other international teachers from other countries and be recruited by other agencies that were not included in this study. The scope of this study covered middle and high school teachers from developing countries and teachers who teach core subjects and modern language. The teachers mentioned the need for training to meet the needs of students with disabilities. I recommend that research be done on the challenges special education teachers face with their adjustment to providing instruction for a student with special needs and compare the difference with their home countries. Finally, the discussion on the perceptions of international teachers can be balanced by investigating the perceptions of mentors and administrators who work directly with international teachers facing challenges. When all the perspectives are

compared, the body of research may be enriched and international teachers can have a more successful transition to teaching in the U.S.

Implications

The research study on the perceptions of international teachers from developing countries carries several implications for positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal change. Firstly, including the voices of the international teachers can significantly validate them as professionals in their own right (Participate Learning, 2021) and better equip the newly recruited educators to be cultural ambassadors (Educational Partners International, 2021) that share their culture with the students and staff at their new schools. The inclusion of cross-cultural training and socializing in a caring community will facilitate the fulfillment of their roles as cultural ambassadors.

The data provided from the results of this study can have implications for positive social change on the organizational and societal levels by providing the school leaders with valuable data needed to make changes in the way they prepare new international teachers for their role in the new learning environment. As suggested by Sahling and DeCarvalho (2021) and Poole (2020) the international teachers' unique identity merits their lived experiences being valued as scientific data. The leadership of the study site and district now have evidence of the perceptions of the teachers regarding their challenges and needs to help in making decisions that affect the way the teachers carry out their jobs.

With documented scholarly research on the lived experiences of the teachers, the school leaders in South Carolina and any other state have a frame of reference to consult when they have to make decisions about international teacher preparation. Leaders can now be better prepared to accommodate the teachers by knowing how to meet their professional and personal needs (Moss, 2018; Roth, 2014). When the needs of the teachers are understood and met, the quality of instruction will improve, and student achievement will become more attainable (Carr, 2020).

Conclusion

One of the participants stated that they want to be treated as professionals and not like they are just here to fill vacancies. The statement brought attention to the participants' feelings about the invalidation of their professional expertise when they come to the U.S. Although they are categorized as "new" teachers in the U.S., there is a requirement that they have 3-5 years' experience before being accepted into the program. As I stated in the results regarding RQ3, teachers expressed a need to be validated as professional and not just "thrust" (IT-8) into the U.S. classroom blindfolded to fail at the profession they succeed in while in their home countries.

Another teacher mentioned the need for a caring community that allows them to vent, share culture, and build relationships with their administrators (IT-13). International teachers are not accustomed to the isolation of the U.S. educational environment, so they may need opportunities for socialization to recapture the sense of community they enjoyed in their home country (IT- 8).

The mobility of the teaching profession makes it necessary for cultural awareness, responsiveness, and mutual sharing to become a buzzword among all educators. Regardless of where teachers travel to practice their profession, they need to be equipped with the skill, tools, and knowledge that will make them adjust without jeopardizing their professional capacity and the learning outcomes of their students.

The gap in practice for this study was that the body of knowledge about mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the U.S does not contain the perspectives of international teachers from developing countries. The phenomenon of international teachers coming to the U.S is here to stay (Self & Dulaney, 2018), so school leaders would benefit from learning how best to meet the needs of the teachers to help them succeed in the U.S. classroom. Data from this study can help leaders make informed decisions about the international teachers' adjustment to mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the U.S. If the leaders use data from this study to implement changes, international middle and high school teachers from developing countries can be better equipped to carry out effective instruction to improve student achievement, and by extension improve the overall performance of public schools in the post No Child Left Behind era.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol and Interview Questions for Educators

Opening Statement

[Read to interviewee] Thank you for agreeing to discuss the perceptions of the international middle and high school teachers on the challenges they face with adjusting to mandated curriculum and instructional practices that may influence classroom management and effective instruction for student achievement.

I will be conducting interviews with other international teachers. Your participation is entirely voluntary. At any time during the process, you may opt-out of the interview or decline to answer a question. Each interview will be audio recorded as a backup. I will send a copy of the data findings analysis so you can check for the accuracy of the interpretation. Researchers call this member checking.

As stated in the consent form, all personal information will be safeguarded by the means I described. To protect your confidentiality, you will be assigned an alpha-numeric identifier, and you will only be addressed by the assigned identifier. Recruiting was done by individual email without knowledge of the supervisors or administrators. The confidentiality agreement was put in place to protect participants during the interview and to assure you that the data I collect will only be used for research and not shared with any one in a leadership position.

During the interview you may become tired. You may ask for a drink, or ask to take a break. You can refuse to answer a question or request t Ravitch & Carl, 2016; or stop the interview at any time. Please let me know and I will respect your wishes.

Are there any questions for me before we begin the interview?

[Turn on computer recording software and test]
[Remember to remain in the role of a researcher and not as a counselor]

Demographic questions:

i.   What is your home country? Home Country: Columbia __ Jamaica ___ Cameroon ___ Kenya __ Venezuela __ Philippines ___ India __
ii.   What grade level do you teach –middle or high school? Middle ___   High _____
iii.   How many years have you taught at this grade level? _____
iv.   What subject do you teach? _____
v.   Which recruiting agency recruited you to teach in the US? EPI ___ FACES ____ Participate___

Interview Questions:
Rapport Building Question:

1. How are you doing today?
2. Do you have any questions about the interview process before we begin?
3. Is there anything I can do to make this process more comfortable for you before we begin?

Questions focused on RQ1: What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries in Southern United States regarding the challenges they face when adjusting to the mandated curriculum and instructional practices in the US?

1. As a new US teacher, what were the greatest challenges with using mandated curriculum required by the state?

> Possible probes: Please give an example. Please elaborate on your responses.

2. As a new US teacher, what were the greatest challenges with using instructional practices required by the school and district?

3. As a new US teacher, what were the challenges you faced with mandated curriculum and/or instructional practices to prepare students for standardized tests?

> Possible Probes: Please give me an example. Please elaborate eon your responses.

4. Compare the level of autonomy you had over your classroom in your home country with the level of autonomy you have over your classroom in the US.

5. What challenges did you face with autonomy in the US classroom? How is it the same and how is it different from the experience in your home country?

> Possible Probe: What would you say is one curricular decision (if any) you could make in one setting that you could make in the other?

Questions focused on RQ2: What are the perceptions of international middle and high school teachers from developing countries at a rural high school in Southern United States on the influence of mandated curriculum and instructional practices on effective classroom management practices?

6. What are your thoughts on the influence (if any) of mandated curriculum on effective classroom management?

Possible Probe: Please elaborate on your response and give examples.

7. What are your thoughts on the influence (if any) of instructional practices in the US on effective classroom management?

   Possible Probe: Please elaborate on your response.

8. What factors do you think influence effective classroom management in the US classroom?

   Possible probe: Elaborate on your response. Tell me more about X factor.

9. How is managing a classroom in the US similar to or different from managing a classroom in your home country?

   Possible probe: Please elaborate on your response. Give me an example.

Questions focused on RQ3: What are perceptions of international middle and high school teachers on what international teachers need to make the adjustment process to mandated curriculum less challenging?

10. What training or professional development do you feel may have helped you in adjusting to mandated curriculum in the US?

11. What training or professional development do you feel may have helped you in adjusting to instructional practices in the US?

12. What are your thoughts on the influence of cross-cultural training on adjusting to mandated curriculum in the US?

13. If you had to change one thing about how school leaders could change the preparation of international teachers when they arrive in the United States, what would it be?

    Possible Probe: How do you think making the change will make the adjustment less challenging?

Closing questions:

Is there any information you would like to share about your adjustment to mandated curriculum that I did not ask?

Closing Statement

[Read to interviewee] Thank you again for being willing to participate in the interview. After the data are analyzed, I will provide you with a summary of the data findings to review for accuracy, to determine if the themes accurately represent your thoughts. Do you have any questions?

[wait]. If you think of any questions later, you can contact me.

Thank you.

As a thank you for your time and efforts in contributing to the body of knowledge about international teachers from developing countries, I will be mailing you a $10 gift card for Starbucks, Amazon or Wal-Mart. Please let me know your preference.