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Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of the Jolly Phonics Program on Students' Literacy

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Lorane Moodie-Reid

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2016

Abstract

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by

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MSc, Central Connecticut University, 2003

BEd, University of the West Indies, Mona, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

At 2 primary schools in Western Jamaica, students at the Grade 1 level lacked basic literacy skills of comprehension, letter recognition, letter sounds, and oral communication. The purpose of this qualitative evaluation study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of the Jolly Phonics program implemented to improve students' literacy in Grades 1-3. Guided by Engestrom's activity theory, the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics approach was examined based on the sociocultural learning theories of Vygotsky, Dewey, and Piaget. The research questions focused on teachers' perceptions of the program's impact on students' literacy improvement and of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program. Data collection involved individual interviews with 8 teachers from 2 selected primary schools with a representation of at least 2 teachers from each grade level. Using open coding and thematic analysis, emerging minor and major themes were identified. Themes included (a) positive impact on curriculum and instructional delivery; (b) focus on all students who lacked basic literacy skills; (c) development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension, and listening skills; (d) workshops that are stimulating and informative; (e) support from teachers and administrators; and (g) greater focus placed at the lower grades. Overall, the findings indicated that the Jolly Phonics program had a positive impact on struggling readers in Grades 1-3. Implications for positive social change include providing the local district with research-based findings on teachers' perceptions of the impact of and strategies used in the Jolly Phonics Program. The findings can be used to support programming decisions and professional development to improve literacy skills of early and struggling readers.

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Dedication

I dedicate this study to my son, Bradley Mark Reid, Jr., and husband Bradley Mark Reid, Sr., who gave constant support to facilitate my assignments. To my mother, Mrs. Beryl Moodie, and father, Lebert Moodie (deceased), who taught me the virtue of patience and the value of hard work. To all family members, friends, colleagues, and well-wishers who supported me in prayer and encouragement, which helped to propel me along my doctoral journey.

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Table of Contents

Section 1: The Problem.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Rationale.....	2
Description of the Local Problem.....	2
Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level.....	5
Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature.....	9
Purpose of the Study.....	133
Definitions of Terms.....	144
Implementation.....	155
Jolly Phonics USAID Support Program.....	155
Literacy.....	155
Phonics Learning Styles and Abilities.....	155
Program Evaluation.....	155
Significance of the Problem.....	166
Why Program Evaluation is Necessary.....	178
Timeliness of Program Evaluation.....	188
Failures of Program Evaluation.....	199
Solutions for Lack of Program Evaluations.....	20
Research Questions.....	23
Literature Review Addressing the Problem.....	23
Strategy Used for Searching Literature.....	23
The Theoretical Base.....	24

Skills taught through use of the Jolly Phonics program	277
Principles of Synthetic Phonics	277
Early Intervention	299
Struggling Readers.....	31
Implications.....	32
Summary.....	33
Section 2: The Methodology.....	34
Justification of the Qualitative Research Design	35
Participants.....	399
Data Collection	41
Data Analysis Methods	44
Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations.....	45
Data Analysis Results	45
Restatement of Research Questions.....	46
Research Questions.....	56
Themes identified.....	60
Findings.....	61
Evidence of Quality	62
Conclusion	64
Section 3: The Project.....	65
Introduction.....	65
Description of goals	65
Rationale	67

Review of Literature	68
Program Evaluation and Academic Interventions	68
Relevance of the Evaluation Report	72
Project Description.....	74
Needed Resources and Existing Supports.....	74
Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers	75
Proposal for Implementation and Timetable.....	75
Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others	76
Project Evaluation Plan.....	76
Project Implications Including Social Change.....	77
Local Community	77
Far- Reaching.....	78
Conclusion	79
Section 4: Reflections and conclusions.....	80
Introduction.....	80
Project Strengths	80
Project Limitations.....	82
Recommendations for Alternative Approaches	83
Scholarship.....	84
Project Development and Evaluation.....	86
Leadership and Change.....	86
Analysis of Self as Scholar	87
Analysis of Self as Practitioner.....	88

Analysis of Self as Project Developer	89
Reflection on Importance of the Study	90
Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research	91
Conclusion	91
References	93
Appendix A: A Summative Program Evaluation Report.....	120
The Impact of the Jolly Phonics on Literacy	120
Program Description	121
The Intervention Program.....	123
Jolly Phonics Program	123
Data Analysis	124
Research Questions	135
Themes Identified	136
Findings.....	137
Recommendations.....	138
Conclusion	140
Appendix B: Interview Protocol	141
Appendix C: Teacher Consent Form	143

List of Tables

Table 1. School F : Grade One Students Proficiency Performance on Reading Readiness	
Subskills.....	6

Table 2. School G: Students Performance on Grade 3 Diagnostics Reading and Listening
Comprehension Test June (2014) 7

Section 1: The Problem

Introduction

A child's right to education provides a basis for effective educational administration. The No Child Left Behind (2001) mandate sets the premise for accountability in ensuring student achievement. School regions are pressured to meet national literacy targets set by the Ministry of Education. Intervention programs initiatives are often implemented for short term solutions without a focus on program evaluation. Program evaluation plays a significant role in determining whether programs initiated are benefitting students. The problem addressed in this study was students identified as not ready for Grade 1 lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication indicated by the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (Grade One Individual Learning Profile, 2012). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program piloted, and adopted in two schools to determine its impact on Grades 1-3 students' literacy performance, teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the program, and future recommendations and implementations to bring about positive social change.

This section highlighted the definition of the problem, description of the local problem, rationale for the study, theoretical framework, and the use of the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3 as early intervention. Researchers indicated the significance of program evaluation in providing administrators with evidence to inform professional decision-makers in an effort to maximize program success. (Nelson, 2014). Literature

emphasized the relevance of developing phonological awareness in the process of gaining proficiency in literacy skills at the elementary level.

Definition of the Problem

The local problem that prompted this study was students identified as not ready for Grade 1 lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication indicated by the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (Grade One Individual Learning Profile, 2012). The schools, district and national literacy scores at Grades 1-3 showed no significant increase. The Jolly Phonics program was introduced as an intervention to improve the literacy targets in local schools. A gap was created because no evaluation of program was conducted to determine the impact of the intervention. A summative program evaluation was carried out to determine the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 at two primary schools.

Rationale

Description of the Local Problem

At a local school, Jamaican Creole, which is comprised of a mixture of some English words and African dialects, is the dominant language spoken in the homes of the Grade 1 entrants from Glendevon, Green Pond, and Farm to primary schools (Grade One Individual Learning Profile, 2012). The majority of parents whose children speak Jamaican Creole are from a low socioeconomic status. Reading was a problem in the lower primary grades, especially among boys (World Data on Education, 2010). This Creole interference with Standard Jamaican English often presented a language barrier

for students' effective use of formal Jamaican Standard English, up to the Grade 4 level and beyond, contributing to deficient literacy skills (Lewis, 2010).

To address the problem of low literacy at the local schools, over a period of 3 days in 2009, Grades 1-3 teachers went through a professional development training implemented by administrators of the Jolly Phonics USAID program. The program focused on the development of reading and vocabulary skills to facilitate oral and written formal communication (World Data on Education, 2010). This research based program emphasized the development of phonetic awareness to improve the development of literacy skills in the early years (World Data on Education, 2010). The Jolly Phonics program uses a child centered approach to teaching literacy through synthetic phonics (Campbell, 2015). Students develop an association between the letter sounds and related letters through kinesthetic activities designed to facilitate the transition to reading printed words. The strategies facilitated the development of early literacy skills aligned with local and national assessments (Cunningham, 2012). To determine the aptitude and educational comprehension of students, the Ministry of Education in Jamaica created the Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) instrument to gauge individual students' readiness for Grade 1. At the start of the academic year, in all primary schools in Jamaica teachers assessed students to make decisions about individual and group instructional activities. The results of the test showed that many Grade 1 students lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication (World Data on Education, 2010). This test indicated that the majority of students entering Grade 1 at some primary schools of the Region 1V School District were

reading below the first grade level (World Data on Education, 2010). Many of these students attended infant or early childhood schools at the age of 3 and transitioned into the primary school Grade 1 at the age of 6. In addition, to determine the aptitude and educational comprehension of Grade 4 students, a standardized Grade 4 Literacy Test was used to rate mastery levels at the national level and consisted of three sections: word recognition, reading comprehension, and communication tasks (Lewis, 2010). The National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy (2011) indicated that Grade 4 literacy was at 65% for 2011.

To address the problems of comprehensive literacy and to improve reading skills, the Ministry of Education mandated that 100% of children should achieve literacy at Grade 4 by 2015 (Jamaica KDID, 2011). The Ministry also implemented the Literacy 1-2-3 program, and endorsed the Jolly Phonics multisensory program, to develop early literacy skills (Wilson, 2013). Coordinators adopted the Jolly Phonics program for school-wide use, and school administrators supplied the Jolly Phonics activity kits district-wide for implementation (Wilson, 2013). Although implemented, there has not been a formal evaluation of the impact of the program with data analysis and feedback for the administrators, school board, program coordinators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to assess the merits of the phonics program, nor students' progress with phonics skills and subskills.

The educational setting of this study was two primary school in Jamaica, comprised of six primary grades (1- 6). Each grade consisted of one or two classes, each supervised by a trained teacher with a student ratio of approximately 35:1. Parents are

mainly low-income earners with limited literacy skills who rely on English as a second language. Given the low socioeconomic background and limited literacy levels of the majority of parents of the students at these primary schools, children are likely to have limited exposure to English in the form of a printed text and are not exposed to standard English spoken in the home, which affects their development of essential listening vocabulary and communication skills.

Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level

The education system in Jamaica evolved from a history of slavery which was monopolized by the British rule (Central Intelligence Agency, 2012). The majority of Jamaicans speak both English -- the official language -- and Patois (Patwa), which is Jamaican Creole. Families that are more educated use standard English in their homes. In recent years, English has gained wide acceptance with the middle class (Bryan, 2012). However, the majority of the country's population is primarily of a low socioeconomic status. Creole is the main language spoken in lower class homes (Cooper, 2009; Jettka, 2010). According to Cayol (2008), Jamaican Creole is the mother tongue, and standard English is considered a second language in Jamaica. These are two languages with distinct grammatical structures and spelling (Jettka, 2010). The Jamaican Standard English is for formal instruction, assessment, and international communication. The Jamaican Creole is for oral communications.

The students in Jamaica enter the formal education system using the language spoken in the home. They often find it difficult to read, write, and spell standard English, which consists of words of British origin, and in some cases teachers and administrator

cannot understand what students say (Bryan, 2012; Jettka, 2010). To address the problem, the Ministry of Education mandated 100% literacy at Grade 4 by 2015 (Jamaica KDID, 2011). Thus, the Jamaican educator's task is to use the necessary skills and resources to enable all students to become proficient with the use of standard English as a measure of literacy.

One of the selected primary school's report indicated the reading readiness proficiency of 25 students registered in Grade 1 (see Table 1). A significant number of these students have not mastered the basic reading readiness subskills as evidenced by the percentages. Table 2 indicated the Diagnostics Reading, and Listening Comprehension mastery performances of 26 students in a class at one of the selected primary schools.

Table 1

School F : Grade One Students Proficiency Performance on Reading Readiness Subskills

Subskills	Number of Students	Percentage
(Phonics)- Identify Letter		
Names	14	56 %
(Phonics)- Identify Initial	10	40 %
Letter Sound		
Listening Comprehension/ Follow directions or steps	13	52 %
Oral		
Language/Communicates clearly	2	8 %

Table 1

School G: Students Performance on Grade 3 Diagnostics Reading and Listening Comprehension Test June (2014)

Levels	Number of Students	Percentage
Mastery	3	11.5 %
Near Mastery	10	38.5 %
Non- Mastery	13	50%

As evidenced in Table 1, subskills analysis indicated that students lacked phonetic awareness and grammatical structure in their language usage. Students lacked skills related to letter and sound identification, as well as listening skills and oral communication (Development of Education, 2008). The Grade 3 Diagnostic Assessment Test also revealed a lack of reading and listening skills. Jamaican Creole or Patois (Patwa) is the primary language in these low-income homes (Bryan, 2012). This distinctive language, inclusive of a mixture of the Jamaican Standard English and African words, presents a language barrier. Students are unable to effectively apply the phonetic skills to demonstrate literacy development using standard English.

The GOILP indicated that a significant number of students entering Grade 1 are deficient in identifying letters of the alphabet, letter sounds, oral, and written communication (Development of Education, 2008). Students struggle with literacy from one grade to another. Implemented in 2009, the Grade 4 Literacy Test replaced the Grade

4 Diagnostic Test to certify students' literacy levels, in an effort to stem the transition of students to the secondary level who were not deemed literate. Data showed a mastery level of 67.3% in 2009, 64.5% in 2010, and 69% in 2011 (Hunter, 2012). The piloting of the Jolly Phonics literacy program resulted from many students performing below the national and regional literacy target level of 100%. Teachers involved in a professional development training workshop indicated that the implementation of the program helped remedy deficient literacy skills (Wilson, 2013). The evaluation of the literacy programs was supposed to be an indicator of success (Hur & Suh, 2010). While there might be a perception of a positive or negative impact of the Jolly Phonics approach on literacy, the depth of the impact needs analysis. Hay and Fielding-Barnsley (2012) posited that an intervention can positively impact the development of emergent literacy skills. According to Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, and Humbach (2012), longitudinal studies indicated a relationship between the development of literacy at the elementary level and proficiency and achievement at the secondary level. A gap in practice exists because the school administrators have failed to study the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program and the intervention strategies used by teachers in Grades 1-3.

The government facilitated access to literacy through formal programs, agencies, and, professional development. According to Flagg (2013), formal evaluations of programs and the education system are crucial to determine proficiency and effectiveness. A data-driven report provided insights to the merits of a regional or national adoption of the program, resulting in a national impact on the development of literacy benefiting the educational and social development of society (Hassen, 2013).

Ahmed (2011) emphasized that functionally literate individuals can spur growth and economic development. According to Young-Lyun (2011), an education system cannot effectively benefit from new programs if they are not evaluated. The evaluation will provide the findings that will determine the extent to which strategic goals and objectives are met. Informed decisions can then be made based on findings, and recommendations. Stakeholders will be privy to this valid and reliable data.

Evidence of the Problem from the Professional Literature

Literature has provided evidence of the relevance of program evaluations. Patton (1997) and Hassen (2013) emphasized that evaluation is necessary to make judgments, for improvement, and to engender knowledge. Judgment-oriented evaluations can be used to examine program effectiveness, goals, objectives, and target attainments (Qin, 2012). Research and decisions using improvement oriented evaluations develop quality programs whereas knowledge-oriented evaluations focus on how programs operate and the impact of interventions in creating changes (Hassen, 2013). According to Young-Lyun (2011), evaluation assists stakeholders in determining the effectiveness of programs. Zohrabi (2011) highlighted the importance of identifying problems and addressing them promptly in program implementation. Poor program evaluation robs organizations of maximum improvement opportunities. Qin (2012), in an empirical study, divulged that program evaluations are effective tools in determining the impact of a program on students' learning outcomes. Program evaluations can be used to identify and correct errors and shortfalls. Kolberg (2013) contended that formative and summative evaluations are important in achieving program goals. Formative evaluations can be used

to monitor activities which may have a negative or positive impact on the program outcomes. Summative evaluation is necessary for evidence of the findings and recommendations in regard to program goals and objectives.

Professional development. Professional development enables growth and development of stakeholders in an effort to achieve organizational goals. Trumbull and Gerzon (2013) argued that professional development is vital to program implementation. Fuchs and Lemon (2010) recommended rigorous training, adequate teacher preparation, and authentic supervision to guarantee the successful implementation of any intervention aimed at improving students' performance. Silva and Contreras (2011) emphasized the integration of professional development with program implementation to facilitate teacher effectiveness. DiBiase (2014) also agreed that aspects of training, supervision, assessment, and evaluation are paramount to the implementation of intervention programs. Savage, Abraml, Hipps, and Deault (2009), through a randomized and controlled trial study of the ABRACADABRAReading Intervention program in Grade 1, revealed that crucial to the success of the reading program was professional development in delivering the curriculum. Dove and Freely (2011) maintained that school leadership plays a role in the success of programs. Rule and John (2011) posited that the direct involvement of principals in school improvement programs yields greater success. Administrators are the promoters of shared vision, and should be able to motivate stakeholders and monitor activities aimed at achieving established objectives.

The need for literacy skills. Literacy is paramount for meeting the needs of a functional society. According to Keefe and Copeland (2011), literate is defined as an

individual who has the ability to read and write. VanDeWeghe (2011) argued that literacy involves the development of skills in reading, writing, listening, speaking, viewing, and visual representation. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) characterized literacy as being a basic human right with the statement, “Literacy is a right and not a privilege” (as cited in Keefe & Copeland, 2011, p. 93). Every child should be literate. The school must provide the necessary instructions to facilitate the development of literacy skills in the formative years. However, many students struggle with the ability to read, write, and think critically. Hall (2013) contended that learning to read is paramount in the early years because it sets the stage for the success of continued education. According to Bekman, Aksu-Koc, and Erguvanli-Taylan (2011), early intervention programs focus on readiness for literacy acquisition. Students develop familiarity with print, listening comprehension, narrative competence, and phonetic awareness. White (2011) claimed that students struggle to read fluently, interpret the text, and make inferences when they lack basic syntactic and phonetic skills. The ability to decode is embedded in phonetic awareness.

Problems associated with poor literacy skills. The problem of literacy transcends the local educational environment to affect the larger educational field. The National Comprehensive Literacy Strategy (2011) highlighted that many students, particularly boys in Grade 9 or at 15 years of age, encounter problems learning the content areas of various subjects because of their inability to read and write well. In response, the Ministry of Education embarked on policies targeting universal literacy of Grade 4 students by 2015 and a competence-based transition policy from the primary to

the secondary level (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2004). The Minister of Education, Andrew Holness, proclaimed that there was an association between illiteracy and violence in schools because many students become frustrated when they are unable to understand and connect with curriculum instruction (Jamaica Gleaner, 2008). Students who find it difficult to grasp concepts are likely to become demotivated which could engender anger. In order to occupy their time illiterate students are also likely to engage in physical activities that could lead to violence. Strategic plans must be put in place to develop the literacy skills of struggling learners.

The negative impact of illiteracy on the labor force and society has resulted in a greater concentration on adult literacy. According to the National Report of Jamaica (2008), the Jamaica Foundation for Lifelong Learning (JFLL) was launched in October 2006 to “bridge the gap between the school system and the facilities that are available to make persons more productive members of society” (p. 2). The productivity of the labor force demands a significant percentage of functionally literate citizens. Adults would therefore have to be trained to meet the expected job requirements. The preparation of students must reflect the development of literacy skills suitable for the global community.

Impact of poverty on the development of literacy skills. There is a relationship between socioeconomic status and academic attainment. Vernon-Fergans et al. (2012) posited that children from low-income families are particularly at risk for age-level vocabulary development, and they experience learning difficulties at rates 1.2 to 3.4 times higher than middle to upper socioeconomic families who do not live in poverty. Templin (2013) also argued that communication among family members and related

home surroundings affect the development of emergent literacy skills in children. Pretorius (2014) contended that the inability to read and write efficiently is due to a lack of literacy reinforcement in the homes, such as a lack of reading materials and educational activities. Hay and Fielding-Barnsley (2012) maintained that children's learning has a significant impact on the language and speech patterns in the home. The environment of the child is likely to influence the interaction and learning outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

Mainstream students entering Grade 1 of primary schools at the Region 1V School District are reading below the first grade level (World Data on Education, 2010). Students recognized as not ready for Grade 1 lack basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication as indicated by the GOILP (World Data on Education, 2010). The local problem reflected the lack of evaluation of the USAID Jolly Phonics support program on literacy in Grades 1-3. The intervention program needed evaluation to determine the effectiveness of its implementation. The program addressed the low literacy skills related to phonics, reading comprehension, and communication in the early grades (World Data on Education, 2010).

The purpose of the research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics USAID Support program piloted at the schools, which was adopted to improve literacy in Grades 1-3. The aim was to improve the low literacy rates of students in Grades 1-3 through program evaluation. Teachers' opinions of the outcome of the teaching strategies used through professional development workshops, activities, and curriculum alignment

helped to determine the effectiveness of the literacy program. The research provided a status update of the local literacy problem in Grads 1-3 so possible solutions and recommendations can be formulated for better program implementation and improved student outcomes. The study provided a framework for evaluating programs for informed judgments, improvement, and creation of knowledge. The findings revealed that the Jolly Phonics program had positively impacted literacy in Grades 1-3. This study facilitated potential positive social change, as it should influence the decision making of education administrators of the attainment of program objectives of literacy improvement and the development of possible modifications and recommendations.

There was a need to study the impact of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy in Grades 1-3. According to Dailey (2014) and Joseph (2013), students' literacy development at the early grades is paramount to achieving local and national educational targets. The Ministry of Education, teachers, administrators, students, parents, partners, and sponsors profit from addressing the literacy problem at early grades. Stakeholders such as the regional supervisors, administrators, teachers, and parents needed to know the impact of the assessment on students' outcomes and possible recommendations.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions of terms facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the study.

Implementation: Implementation refers to the process of putting practice or program in place in the functioning of an organization, such as a school, and the set of activities designed to accomplish this (Forman et al., 2013).

Jolly Phonics USAID Support Program: Jolly Phonics is a commercially accessible program developed in the United Kingdom. The instructions focus on the development of five main skills related to letter sounds, letter formation, blending letter sounds for reading, identifying sounds for writing, and spelling tricky words (Kwan, 2005). Students become engaged in the teaching-learning process associating actions with each of the 42 letter sounds. According to Callinan and Van der Zee (2010) and Campbell (2015), the phonemes are combined with kinesthetic activities like imitating a light switch being on or off for the phoneme /o/. *Literacy:* According to Ahmed (2011), the definition of literacy is grounded in a social context and has evolved from being able to read and write, engage in group-related activities, and achieve functional goals to displaying the capacity to identify, interpret, construct, communicate, and calculate effectively within given contexts. Literacy is a process that facilitates the maximization of individuals' potentials to attain personal, societal, and organizational goals.

Phonics learning styles and abilities: Synthetic phonics approach embraces the initial teaching of letters, letter sounds, and its blending to form and sound out basic words (Cunningham, 2012). The teaching separates letter sound, and then blends together letter sounds form words (Campbell, 2015).

Program evaluation: A program evaluation is a systematic process of collecting data about a program or an aspect of a program to make important decisions about the

program (Flagg, 2013). A program evaluation is the application of systematic research methods to the assessment of program design, implementation, and effectiveness (Young-Lyun, 2011).

Significance of the Problem

An evaluation of the Jolly Phonics USAID Support program is significant to determine the impact on literacy in Grades 1-3. The teachers' perception of the Jolly Phonics program determined whether Grades 1-3 students with reading challenges benefitted from the literacy intervention program. A significant number of students entering Grade 1 in the primary schools at the Region 1V School District lacked phonological awareness, which facilitates the use of letters, letter sounds, and the combination of letters to form words (Grade One Individual Learning Profile, 2013, 2014). The Ministry of Education endorsed the Jolly Phonics literacy program in Grades 1-3 to improve students' literacy skills. Grades 1-3 teachers were engaged in professional development workshops designed to provide instructional reading strategies and use of related reading resources. Improved reading achievement positively impacted the overall academic performance of these Grades 1-3 students. Grade 3 students are better able to meet the required national standard of the Grade Three Diagnostic Test. Grade 4 teachers benefitted from having students with adequate literacy skills to master the Grade 4 Literacy Test. Stakeholders are knowledgeable of the outcomes of the Jolly Phonics program implemented at the school. Administrators at the school can use the data from Grades 1-3 teacher interviews to help determine whether the program should continue as

intended or if adjustments need to be made to facilitate improved literacy skills of future students at Grades 1-3.

A gap in practice existed because there was a lack of evaluation of the impact of the USAID support Jolly Phonics program in developing critical literacy skills from Grades 1-3 at the schools. There was no formal evaluation report of the literacy intervention program established at the schools. An analysis of the Jolly Phonics program determined that students in Grades 1-3 who struggle to read benefit from the literacy intervention program at the school. The program evaluation also determined that it is beneficial to continue the program based on teachers' perception of the program, along with strategies used through participation in related professional development workshops.

Why Program Evaluation is Necessary

The evaluation of the Jolly Phonics program determined that it is beneficial to continue the program as designed and the strategies used to improve the performance of students. Zohrabi (2011) posited that identifying problems and finding solutions are paramount to program evaluation. Activities linked to the planning and delivery of innovative programs facilitates judgments about assumptions, implementation processes, and outcomes of the specified program. Evaluation provides administrators with evidence to inform professional decision-makers (Nelson, 2014). Decisions are associated with accountability or results, development, or a comprehensive understanding of the implementation process (Chelimsky, 1997). Kolberg (2013) agreed that evaluations are used to determine how the program operates to assess outcomes and make improvements, to assess the efficiency, and to determine how the program works. Flagg (2013) posited

that the purpose of evaluation is to delineate, acquire, and make available information for making educational decisions unique to a particular situation, rather than generalizable to many settings. Program evaluations are aimed at evaluating specific programs with aligned objectives. Where similar conditions exist the results may be the same.

An evaluation of the impact of the USAID Support Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 provided stakeholders with valid and reliable data for the development of an effective literacy program and social change. This is important to the local context to tackle early literacy difficulties and the development of basic literacy skills. The education system at large would meet national and regional literacy targets of 100%, ensuring that every student acquire basic functional literacy. Administrators have a phonological model to prevent reading difficulties and to assist struggling readers. Additionally, the implementers of the program eliminate or minimize issues of illiteracy at the secondary and tertiary levels if the Jolly Phonics approach proved effective. Literacy is also vital to career and services needed for societal development, as reduced costs of social services results in benefits for students and their families (Bokova& Bush, 2012). Furthermore, high school graduates are less likely to receive nonessential benefits from a public welfare fund (Belfield & Levin, 2007). Illiterate adults are more likely to be unemployed, and susceptible to poverty.

Timeliness of Program Evaluation

Feedback from evaluation often comes from researchers who inform administrators regarding future decisions or changes to practice, arising either from projects or assessment of teaching learning. Evaluations at the end of a course or project,

which might provide administrators with summative evidence, may be ineffective if the task is already completed (Haji, Morin, & Parker, 2013). Program evaluations can be formative or ongoing, examining different perspectives over a particular period (Bennett, 2011). Qin (2012) posited that waiting for the end of a program to determine what to evaluate is unwise. In some cases, however, evaluation undertaken before the full effects of an intervention has worked through the system.

Failures of Program Evaluation

The issue of what works and what does not work for program evaluation is examined through contemporary debates on the impact evaluation focusing mainly on methodology failures. Stame (2010) argued the need to focus on program theory failures and implementation failures. Program theory failures result from a matter of complexity in trying to understand the underlining principles of a program. Varying explanations without specific data provided by researchers results in erroneous information (Kizito, 2015). Implementation failure results from not applying guiding principles and not considering context when establishing a new program (Haji et al., 2013). Methodology failures relate to how data are gathered and analyzed. The validity, and analysis of data based on the research design, can lead to different approaches that impact evaluation (Patton, 2011).

Program implementation is usually aligned to a theoretical framework. Programs have underlined theories, which guide in understanding the world (Stame, 2010). These theories provide a basis for making sense of the challenges associated with implementing program changes. Evaluators can uncover failures that cannot be blamed only on

methodology but relate to implementation and program theory. Durand, Decker, and Kirkman (2014) maintained that regardless of the best efforts of evaluators, program implementation challenges exist. Methods reflecting a successful prediction of program implementation failures in advance may also be lacking.

Stakeholders should be privy to the goals, and objectives of a program before implementation to lessen challenges, and avert failures. Morell (2010), Scheirer et al. (2012), Patton (2011), and GAO (1990) indicated three effective methods that could influence the successful prediction of program implementation. The marker analysis involves all stakeholders and local people in the early stages of identifying likely implementation failures. The wisdom of crowds method empowers all stakeholders, including people with local knowledge, in implementing changes. Mayer-Schoenberger and Cukier (2013) agreed that the big data method reflects an in-depth analysis of enormous amounts of data that may reveal unexpected findings. Scriven (1981) recommended the goal-oriented approach based on precise procedures and the goal-free oriented approach, which facilitates guidelines that are not compulsory. Collaboration facilitates participation in the decision making process of programs and provide consensus for expected outcomes

Solutions for Lack of Program Evaluations

Assessment. The method used for assessment must be valid and reliable. According to Hinds (2013), the evaluation of educational programs involves the teachers, students, curriculum, administrators, and methodology. Curriculum learning outcomes require examination before evaluating the quality of the design. The program results in

recommendations for revisions of the learning tasks, setting, design, and coaching support (Kizito, 2015). Program evaluators contribute to assessment by designing rubrics and assisting in the selection of assessment instruments (Hinds, 2013). Pierson and Borthwich (2010) argued that assessment is an integral and inseparable part of the curriculum development and teaching process. Assessment provides data that should be used to guide the teaching learning process.

Evaluation is paramount to quality implementation and method of delivery (Waters, 2011). Ambrose (2010) highlighted four assessment levels as methods to measure learning, the process of measuring and collecting information, the process of interpreting and evaluating performance data, and the process of making improvements based on the results of data evaluated. Assessment is both formative and summative. According to Kolberg (2013), formative assessment is an ongoing process that informs the general learning process and aids in consensus building, selection of appropriate measurement, data analysis, and making improvement based on specific learning objectives. Summative evaluation informs the results of achievement (Glazer, 2014). Summative evaluations recapitulate data for program outcomes.

Collaboration. Effective schools promote faculty engagement and ownership through collaboration (DiBiase, 2014). An administrator focuses on best practices, leadership, results from data, and relevant professional development for continued growth and development. Flowers (2010) suggested that program evaluations begin with presurveys administered to participants before entering the program. Creswell (2009) indicated that the use of surveys is an inexpensive method that allows for the organized

way of data collection. Rousselle (2013) emphasized the need to involve participants of a program in planning and carrying out of evaluations. Internal evaluators are likely to have a better understanding of the context of the problem. However, participants as internal evaluators relate to the subjectivity of information, but they may withhold avoid blame or failures. Participants may feel vulnerable if unfavorable results reveal withheld or modified information.

Effective leadership. Administrators should be creative thinkers. Kohler-Evans, Webster-Smith, and Albritton (2013) stressed that administrators and other decision makers must be forward thinkers, analyzing data aligned to local and national curriculum standards. Lieberman, Miller, Roy, Hord, and Frank (2014) emphasized the need to facilitate professional development with an aim to construct professional learning communities. A transformational leadership approach builds capacity and monitors and adapts curriculum to meet the needs of students. Patschke (2012) maintained that good leadership is critical to transformation. Leaders who engage in meaningful reform must define the problem that needs attention within the specific local context, facilitate program planning through collaboration with stakeholders, and supervise the implementation process of the program using formative and summative appraisal (Gano-Philips et al., 2011). Data collected and information reviewed determine the assessment of students' learning, the local context, effectiveness of steering committees, building of expertise, and perception of the program through analysis of information collected from surveys. Kizito (2015) posited that evaluation should assess program evaluation and results and identify ways to improve the program evaluated. Trumbull and Gerzon (2013)

argued that evaluation should include efficiency, assessment, administration, and output monitoring, as well as simple goal achievement measurement. Program evaluations should reflect guidelines for the involvement of stakeholders.

Research Questions

The following questions provide analysis through an evaluation report study.

1. How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3?

2. What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3?

Literature Review Addressing the Problem

Strategy Used for Searching Literature

In an effort to develop effective literacy skills, the district implemented the Jolly Phonics USAID support program, originally developed in the United Kingdom. I decided to focus on this program to determine its effectiveness. The process of finding pertinent information commenced with reading about the Jolly Phonics program on websites including Google Scholar. Specific Boolean terms used to search Education Complete, Eric, and Proquest. EBSCO engines included *literacy, phonics, jolly phonics, reading, early intervention, program evaluation, poor program evaluation, impact, curriculum implementation, curriculum evaluation, program evaluation theories, program assessment, educational leadership, activity theory, professional development, teacher*

perceptions, implementation, and literacy strategies. Appropriate citations from related research studies mainly from the last 5 years provided in-depth access to information.

The Theoretical Base

The Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 at two primary schools has not been evaluated. Stame (2010) maintained that evaluation needs a frame of reference to guide the collection of data and interpretation of empirical findings. The theoretical framework for the program evaluation was Engestrom's activity theory. I also examined Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky's cognitive and sociocultural theories of learning highlighted by literature from Mayer (2008) and Ultanir (2012).

Activity theory. Engestrom's (1987) activity theory is associated with Vygotsky's (1978) social psychology, which conceptualizes early childhood development through children's interaction in activities with their surroundings (Dennis, 2014). Activity theory offers a conceptual framework for studying human behavior and explains how systems are coordinated to bring about changes (Engestrom, 1987). An activity system is a means for theoretically bounding social and material resources to achieve an individual and social group's objectives or goals (Engestrom, 1999a). Fundamental elements of the activity system include subject, object, mediating tools, rules, community, and division of labor (Engestrom, 1987).

Collaboration is paramount to the realization of goals of a group. According to Dennis (2014), activity theory is goal-oriented in that different subjects, or individuals, work towards a practical outcome. Teachers and students represent the subject or social groups in this study. The object is the shared vision of the program to improve literacy in

Grades 1-3. Mediation integrates the potentially different perspectives and interests in the pursuit of shared activity. The learning community and the professional development engagements serve as catalysts for achieving organizational goals. Activity theory has helped explain how teachers use instructional strategies such as discussion, argumentation, and clarification to guide student learning (Krier, 2011). Educators have envisaged activity theory as social and cognitive development because beginners learn through participation on how to construct themselves as members of a learning community (Barhoumi, 2015). Lumpkin, Archen, and Dodd (2015) argued that cognitive theorists believe that learning and development result from self-regulation of behavior and metacognition, which reflects an understanding of a person's thinking processes. Shanahan (2010) emphasized that activity theory is a structure for understanding and evaluating mutual goal-oriented practices. Macdonald (2013) highlighted that involvement in a project or activity results in active collaboration. An activity aimed toward an object requires collective effort. The existing relationship facilitated by the participants is paramount to the goal outcome (Roth, 2014). Students and teachers can participate in meaningful activities resulting in improved learning.

Sociocultural theories. A student centered learning environment is linked to the experiences of the learner. According to Bretz (2013), sociocultural theorists such as Vygotsky (1978) believed that learning occurs in a cultural context, and children develop literacy skills through the experiences gained in their social settings. Garner (2011) posited that sociocultural theories support the framework of how children learn. Mayer (2008) stressed that the concept of Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky's cultural social

environment led to students' success in acquiring knowledge. Dewey (1916) maintained that children's learning is self-directed, and educators are facilitators, while Piaget (1976) argued, "the basis of learning is discovery" (p. 107). The constructivist approach, according to Ultanir (2012), emphasized that learning occurs through the interaction of the learner with his or her environment. Educators, therefore, need to create appropriate environment to stimulate learning. Strategies used should facilitate activities such as experiments, discussions, role plays, art and craft. Hands on experiences will lead to individual and cooperative learning.

Students need to learn from their environment in structured ways that facilitate the various stages of their development (Atherton, 2011). Hall (2013) argued that phonetic awareness is associated with print representing both phoneme and grapheme communication. The use of identified and pronounced words, based on internal letter and phoneme sounds, contribute to word meaning and the development of reading comprehension skills (Reyes, 2011). Wyse and Goswami (2013) maintained that the strategies employed by the Jolly Phonics program provide concrete experiences that link print to objects, sounds, and actions. The outcome of this interaction determines the development of literacy of young children or struggling readers. A teacher's pedagogical delivery is the instructional strategies associated with activities linked to the development of phonetic awareness. The synthetic phonics method involves a variety of printed materials related to the teaching of letters, sounds, and syllables. According to Campbell (2015), the use of the Jolly Phonics program results in effective strategies for learning. Students need to make association with learning activities. Scaffolding of the basic

literacy skills and concepts should be done to ensure development of phonetic awareness.

Learning must be stimulating and meaningful for children.

Skills Taught Through use of the Jolly Phonics Program

Reading comprehension refers to the basic syntactic and phonetic skills necessary to read and interpret text. The ability to decode and recognize words is at the core of the Jolly Phonics program (White, 2011). Reyes (2011) highlighted comprehension skill levels from the literal to inferential. The most basic level reflects the understanding of words, literal, and factual meanings, whereas the more complex meanings require inferential interpretation of fiction and nonfiction. Repetition of concepts in various forms permits easier teaching of vocabulary development skill (Rance-Rooney, 2010). Listening comprehension is paramount to identifying and blending letter sounds as well as following instructions for activities.

Principles of Synthetic Phonics

There are fundamental structures related to phonological awareness, letter identification, and decoding skills, which facilitate reading. Hall (2013) indicated that there is a trend of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction entrenched in literacy programs. Analytic and synthetic phonetic principles are effective strategies for teaching reading. According to Shaw and Davidson (2009), analytical approaches include the examination of the whole word first then by segments. Synthetic guidelines, on the other hand, emphasize combination of letters or words and letter sounds. Jolly (2008) contended that children who learn letter sounds before they are exposed to the letters demonstrate sustained gain in reading. Wyse and Goswami (2013) highlighted the

importance of phonological processing, which involves isolating the sounds, relating them to print, application, and interpretation of reading the print or words. Concerning work on sentence structure and parallelism, Campbell, Torr, and Cologon (2012) stressed that phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehensions have significance in the process of reading. The teaching of phonics provides students with the opportunity to learn within a context.

Phonetic awareness aids the development of literacy skills. Davidson (2010) argued that cognitivists link literacy to phonetic awareness, which connects patterns of letters and sounds. Chall (1996) highlighted six stages of reading acquisition. The prereading stage is from birth to 6 years; the initial reading or decoding stage is 6-7 years; confirmation, fluency, and inquiring from print stage is 7-8 years; and reading for learning stage reflects ages 8- 14 years (Chall, 1996) multiple viewpoint stage is ages 14- 18 years, and the constructing and decoding stage occurs in 18 years and over (Chall, 1996). These stages represent a spiral structure to facilitate reading instructions and delivery. Herold (2011) stated the importance of systematically teaching the development of reading skills related to phonetic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Reading is connected to a developmental process which is associated with acquiring literacy skills such as decoding and levels of comprehension.

How phonics is taught can influence the rate of literacy development. Shaw and Davidson (2009) argued that the focus of literacy instructions should be on the process of teaching phonics instead of its scheduling. The Jolly Phonics, and Teaching Handwriting, Reading, and Spelling Skills (THRASS) indicated that during children's first year of

synthetic phonics reading instructions reading skills are developed based on short-term memory skills for words and phonemes (Callinan & Van der zee, 2010). Vernon-Fergans et al. (2012) discussed the need for expertise in phonological and phonemic skills to deal with reading disabilities. Children associated with low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be at risk of not developing effective literacy skills. Templin (2013) mentioned that there is a relationship with social and economic achievements and reading attainments. The more affluent families tend to place more value on literacy. Ramsingh-Mahabir (2012) highlighted the success of implementing the Jolly Phonics Program with students of low socioeconomic status in mixed ability classes. Vernon-Feagans et al. maintained that students benefit more from a combination of integrated language arts and phonics when teaching reading rather than teaching both in isolation. Lu (2010) also stated that phonetic instruction is more effective when it is entrenched in language arts rather than taught separately. Phonics should be taught in a context that would facilitate the engagement of students in their learning. Language arts enable the use of verbal, visual, and written expressions.

Early Intervention

Educators should use of literacy strategies that will facilitate development of basic literacy skills in the formative years. Pretorius (2014) highlighted that early interventions are needed to target students who lack the basic phonological skills or at risk of developing reading difficulties. Training teachers to deliver phonetic instructions is paramount to the success of programs. According to Lam and McMaster (2014), phonetic skills taught within a multisensory environment are beneficial to students at risk of not

developing basic literacy skills. Goldstein (2011) posited that successful comprehensive literacy programs are comprised of print, reading and discussion of stories read aloud, vocabulary work, spelling, and writing. The learner's exposure to the language experience approach facilitates prewriting discussions designed to provide focus for writing activities. Brinda (2011) and Burton-Archie (2014) stressed that educators have a responsibility to ensure that students' literacy transcends the basic level to beneficial literacy skills at the middle and secondary levels. Teachers should be able to identify the learning needs of all students, and employ appropriate strategies to facilitate effective learning.

Assessment and early intervention are vital to the success of literacy improvement. Hilbert and Eis (2014) emphasized that the majority of reading problems are preventable with effective intervention. Templin (2013) maintained that students who have reading challenges by the end of the early grades are likely to struggle with reading at the higher grades levels. According to Burton-Archie (2014), educators must implement interventions to rescue at risk students from reading failures. Campbell, Torr, and Cologon (2012) highlighted the increasing use of the Jolly Phonics commercial program in early grades. Students use the letter sounds in the program with a multisensory approach for reading and writing words. According to Hilbert and Eis (2014), students benefit from phonological awareness instructions prior to direct instruction comprising of print. Reutzel, Petscher, and Spichtig (2012) highlighted the reading research emerging consensus of essential elements of early reading instruction to include phonetic awareness, phonics, oral language, and written concepts about print.

Coleman and Pimentel (2012a) posited that literacy instruction in the early grades focus primarily on phonemic awareness, phonics, word building, and deriving meaning from letters and words. The development of basic literacy skills will lead to functional literacy. Oconnor and Concannon-Gibney (2011) and Earl (2012) highlighted the need for formative assessment in the classroom to efficiently identify students' literacy challenges and to provide relevant assistance. Wiliam (2011) and Bennett (2011) embraced the role of formative assessment in classroom instructions in elementary grades. Bax, Branford-White, Heugh, and Jacoby (2013) suggested that instructors use ongoing assessment to determine students' learning outcomes. Forster and Souvignier (2011) and Croteau (2014) defended the use of assessment as a means of exploring the reading development of poor readers and predicting reading challenges. Baker, Goldstein, and Heffeman (2011) maintained that assessment strategies should reflect regular detection of learning and related difficulties. Heritage (2011), and Helf and Cooke (2011) postulated that formative assessment can help prevent school failures. Continuous monitoring of curriculum and attainment objectives would highlight areas of strengths and weaknesses.

Struggling Readers

The needs and learning styles of each student should be considered by the teachers. Many students struggle to express themselves in writing and reading.. Hagans and Good (2013) accentuated that struggling readers experience a disconnect between the oral language, printed language, and word meanings. Struggling readers lag behind their classmates who are fluent readers (Hagans & Good, 2013). The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (NITL) report stated, "direct systematic instruction in phonics

during the early years of schooling is an essential foundation for teaching children to read” (as cited in Reynolds et al., 2011, p. 264). According to Oldham (2012), educators are responsible for bridging the gaps between success and failure by enabling students to acquire skills in phonetic awareness, reading fluency, reading comprehension, and the use of context clues. Gardner (2011) proposed that teachers take into consideration the learning styles of individual students because students learn in different ways. Lam and McMaster (2014) maintained that students require an atmosphere conducive for learning. Harlin, Murray, and Shea (2010) argued that the literacy challenges are associated with the inadequate attention given to diversity in the classroom under the disguise of standardized testing mandates and requirements for grants. Fisher (2012) and Carlisle and Berebitsky (2011) maintained that sustained professional development is crucial to literacy achievement. There continues to be *teaching to the test* and disregard for struggling readers. Oldham (2012) argued that the ability to read promotes success in other subject areas. Reading facilitates the integration of skills needed for all subjects.

Implications

Several implications arise from the outcome of this project study in an effort to improve literacy. A qualitative investigation into an effective program evaluation of a phonics program and its impact on literacy at the elementary level may promote positive social change. This study on program evaluation serves as a model for the development of recommendations to improve the literacy program for early and struggling readers. Effective program evaluation systems provide the basis for further professional development workshops. Program evaluation provide data specific to a situation, lessen

uncertainties, and clarify gains and losses that different decisions incur. Tentative directions of this study included recommendations for professional development workshops to facilitate strategies for literacy improvement, creating a model of program evaluation for evaluation of programs critical for students' achievements. The use of data collection and analysis could heighten educational leaders' awareness of the relevance of program evaluation in assessing students' achievements or the outcome of intervention.

Summary

The local problem reflected the lack of evaluation of the USAID Support Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 at two primary schools. Students lacked basic literacy skills in the early elementary grades (Development of Education, 2008), and the aim was to attain 100% literacy at Grade 4 by 2015 (Task Force on Educational Reform, 2004). Researchers showed the relevance of program evaluation in making informed decision in an effort to maximize program potential success (Flagg, 2013). Literature highlighted the importance of developing phonological awareness in the process of mastering literacy at the elementary level.

Section 2 comprises details about the methodology employed in sampling, data collection instruments, analysis of strategies, and ethical considerations related to a qualitative research case study on the evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3. Section 3 outlines the project, and Section 4 highlights my reflections, recommendations, and conclusions related to this project study.

Section 2: The Methodology

Introduction

This qualitative summative evaluation addressed the impact of the USAID Jolly Phonics support program on literacy for Grades 1-3 in two primary schools at the Region 1V School District. I interviewed eight teachers teaching Grades 1-3 using semi structured questions to reveal the results of the program implementation. Data collected via semi structured interviews is one of the best ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative methods can be used to obtain the sophisticated details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional methods (Creswell, 2012). The researcher has the opportunity to collect rich descriptions of personal experiences and connections from the participants (Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtle, 2010).

Summative Program evaluation was conducted to determine the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 in two primary schools. Chyung (2015) argued that summative evaluation is designed and conducted to provide stakeholders with evidence based feedback about the program. The systematic collection and analysis of information should reflect improvements or judgements about the quality of the program (Chyung, Wisniewski, Inderbitzen, & Campbell, 2013). Section 2 highlights the methodology used to answer the research questions presented in Section 1. The summative program evaluation includes the descriptions of the research design, selection

of participants, data collection and analysis methods, findings, assumptions, limitations, evidence, and quality of validation.

Justification of the Qualitative Research Design

The summative program evaluation design was suitable for this qualitative study because no previous evaluation was conducted to determine the impact of the intervention on literacy in Grades 1-3 at the two primary schools with similar literacy problems. Summative evaluation is a product or report of the process where the evaluator assesses the effectiveness of a program in attaining expected outcomes (Chyung, 2015).

Qualitative designs such as grounded theory, which researchers use to explain a process or group interaction, and ethnography, which focuses on cultural practices, would not help me to answer the research questions in this study. These designs are related to specific groups or cases interactions. (Creswell, 2012). This study is a summative program evaluation. Action research neither would not answer the research questions because of its focus on creating changes to improve practice (Glesne, 2011). This program evaluation study seeks to determine the outcomes of an intervention program.

Qualitative and quantitative studies require different approaches. Qualitative research focuses on getting information from various sources, such as interviews, whereas quantitative research emphasizes numerical data (McNeil, 2011). Quantitative research would not be appropriate for this study because the investigator “identifies a research problem based on trends in the field or the need to explain why something occurs” (Creswell, 2012, p.13). Students entering Grade 1 lacked basic literacy skills used to assess Grade 1 readiness. There had been no formal evaluation of the literacy

intervention program resulting in the need for an evaluation of the Jolly Phonics literacy intervention program. Yong- Lyun (2011) posited that a program evaluation is used to examine a particular program related to specific school context. The Grades 1-3 teachers participated in professional development workshops to discuss instructional delivery strategies and activities in the implementation of the Jolly Phonics program.

The USAID support Jolly Phonics program sought to develop and improve the literacy skills of students at Grades 1-3 at the primary schools of the Region 1V School District. The goal of this evaluation report study was to provide answers to the following questions:

1. How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3?
2. What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program at Grades 1-3?

Travers (2001) emphasized that observation and interviews are among the five main methods employed by qualitative researchers to collect data. Observation provides practical, theoretical information while interviews facilitate the participants' response to the researchers' interpretation of the answers. The research evidence links to data sources such as documents, interviews, observations, and artifacts. Triangulation sets a firm basis on which to obtain reliable and valid data. Individual interviews were conducted and, collection of field notes and member checking were done. The process of data triangulation acts as a means of verifying results, eliminating methodological limitations

or data, and investigation bias (Jennifer Kim Lian, 2015). These qualitative factors provide insights and valuable data from teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy at Grades 1-3 in the primary school in the Region 1V School District.

The results of a summative program evaluation approach determined the impact of the USAID support Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3. This qualitative methodology allowed for the gathering of personalized information through interviews with participants. The perceptions of Grades 1-3 teachers were a means of assessing the effectiveness of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program and the impact on literacy at Grades 1-3.

Assessment is vital to program evaluation. Nelson (2014) highlighted two major program evaluation assessment types as formative evaluation and summative evaluation. Formative evaluation focuses on ongoing results, whereas summative evaluation reflects results of a program (McNeil, 2011). The type of evaluation is summative if the purpose of the study is to document the results of the program. Summative evaluation helps determine the degree of the impact of a program on participants (Nelson, 2014). There are various formats to present the results of program evaluation reports, which include graphs, charts, a presentation or written report (Nelson, 2014). The results of this project study presented an evaluation report. The two schools did not have the formal data to determine outcomes of the literacy program implemented at Grades 1-3. Grades 1-3 teachers provided information regarding their perceptions of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3. Interviews were conducted with eight Grades 1-3 teachers who

participated in the professional development workshops and implemented the Jolly Phonics literacy program. Grades 1-3 teachers who participated in the professional development workshops participated in the study, and teachers who used the Jolly Phonics program but did not go through the professional development workshops were included to ensure a representative sample of at least eight participants.

Collected data for a summative evaluation is used to measure specific results and aid decision makers in determining how the results relate to the general outcomes of a program (Lodico et al., 2010). According to McNeil (2011), summative data can comprise qualitative data such as interviews with participants that summarize their perceptions of the program under study. When scrutinizing objectives as part of an evaluation process, there was no examination of the formative data during the implementation of the literacy program to assess progress. Because the purpose of this study was to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics program, a summative evaluation was suitable.

A goals-based program evaluation research design was used for this study. My justification for using this type of evaluation was the lack of evaluation of the implemented program, which should determine its effectiveness in achieving the desired goals. The use of interviews indicating teachers' perceptions of the program defined the effectiveness of the program and facilitated recommendations for future projections. Analysis of findings and recommendations made regarding the impact of the program was appropriate for a goals-based evaluation.

Outcome-based measurement is a method to measure whether and how programs create social change. The outcomes and performance measures indicators of this evaluation report study are interviews to determine the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3. The participants of the effectiveness of the literacy program indicated a positive impact on literacy at Grades 1-3. Social change could result from considering the Jolly Phonics program as a model for other schools.

The overall evaluation goal of the program evaluation report study was to determine the impact of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy in Grades 1-3. A significant number of students entering Grade 1 at the two primary schools lacked literacy readiness skills. The Jolly Phonics program focused on improving literacy in Grades 1-3. Guiding research questions provided an analysis of the perceptions of the Grades 1-3 teachers who participated in the implementation of the literacy program. Stakeholders may use the data collected through interviews to conclude whether to continue the use of the Jolly Phonics program and to make possible recommendations for future plans.

Participants

I selected participants using a purposeful criterion sampling procedure because the targeted participants are teachers in Grades 1-3. The population considered was the Grades 1-3 teachers of the two cluster primary schools of the Region 1V School District. There are one or two classes at each grade level with students ranging from ages 6-to 9-years-old. The sample consisted of the eight Grades 1-3 teachers because I wanted to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy in Grades 1-

3. Continuous involvement of teachers in Grades 1-3 led to professional development training and instructional delivery of the program at the schools.

To gain access to the participants for dissertation research, I sought permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), principals of the two selected primary schools, and the Ministry of Education, and I explained the purpose, design, and methodology of the program to them. Withheld from everyone, including the district's superintendent, board of management, vice principals and teachers, were the names of participants of the anticipated site. Participants' responses revealed no names. Codes used prevented any possible identity. Participants also signed a form as an indication of their awareness and willingness to participate in the study. The form included an informed consent stating the need to evaluate the impact of the USAID support Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3, the voluntary nature and procedure of the study, statement of contract and questions, and the right to withdraw at any point in time during the research (see Appendix C).

Teachers received an explanation of the nature, design, conditions, and expected length of the study. I adhered to the Walden University IRB for Ethical Standards in Research guidelines. An open, honest, and unbiased relationship existed between participants and me. Because I was not an administrator at the local school sites on the Region 1V School District, I had not direct supervisory association with the participants, which prevented intimidation or discrimination. Ethical considerations ensured the protection of the rights of participants. Information was kept confidential through the removal of names and codes used for identification, special storage areas at my home and

office, and secured computer files at home and work with protected passwords to protect the identity of participants. The research involved no unlawful communication, query, alteration, or elimination of information with participants. Documents related to teachers' interviews and consent forms are in Appendices B and C.

Data Collection

Subskills were phonics (identifying letters and initial letter sounds), listening comprehension, following directions or steps, and oral communication. Some of these students were at varying levels: *as not yet*, *beginning*, *emergent*, and *proficient*. Students' scores on standardized and non standardized assessments at Grades 1 and 3 of the selected schools provided a means to identify evidence of the local problem. (See Appendix A). The Grade 3 Diagnostics test scores were examined to determine mastery, near mastery, and non mastery levels of reading and listening comprehension (See Appendix A). This data collection occurred before the interviews were conducted.

Data collection involved one-on-one interviews contingent on 15 semi structured, open-ended questions. Selected participants from two selected primary schools remained engaged in the process. Participants came from a pool of eight teachers of Grades 1-3 with a representation of at least two teachers from each grade. Interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes at the local site for each participant and took place before or after school based on each participant's preference and availability. In order to facilitate privacy and to control possible distractions, an enclosed office or classroom was used to conduct the interview. The same open-ended questions facilitated individual responses that were not limited by my viewpoint or perceptions (see Appendix B). Participants were

free to respond based on their perceptions and experiences in relation to the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3. Silverman (2006) maintained that effective interviewing creates opportunities for participants to feel relaxed and knowledgeable to respond appropriately, identify misconceptions, and recommend corrections.

Data collection involved interviews with semi structured open-ended questions to further probe the minds of teachers (see Appendix B). Tape recordings of the full interviews helped to facilitate verbatim expressions and ensured the accuracy of all verbal information communicated. To keep track of data in order to provide valid and reliable data, I used field notes during the actual interviews and during the editing and analysis of transcripts. Transcriptions accompanied taped recordings. Member checking at the end of each interview validated collected field notes. Participants also edited personal transcripts after coding to discuss themes that have emerged.

Colleagues with expertise in the field of literacy scrutinized the original interview questions. I adjusted and examined the relevance of the guiding research questions, ambiguity, and grammatical constructions of each question if and when necessary based on feedback from colleagues. One colleague at the school who vetted the questions had a special responsibility as literacy coordinator, and the other colleague was the language arts coordinator. The regional literacy coach assigned to schools also assisted with validation of the interview questions.

Assessment results from the Ministry of Education assessment unit provided a method to examine comments regarding primary school students' performance and

targets related to Ministry of Education's literacy policies. The use of reflective journals and research logs helped me to create field notes. Not being the administrator at any of the two primary schools, which is the local site, I gained access to conduct the dissertation research through permission from the principals, the Ministry of Education, and participating teachers after approval from IRB. Participants received an explanation of the study, their roles, and protection of rights. Participants also received informed consent forms to indicate their agreement and desired involvement in the study (see Appendix C).

An affable working relationship existed between me and the principals of neighboring schools. I had no social or administrative affiliation with the participants. I made contacts with participants through permission from the principals at the local site. A faculty meeting with teachers who participated in the use of the Jolly Phonics program meeting was arranged at both local sites. The purpose of the study, participants' rights and protection, and consent forms were discussed. The teachers' consent forms were distributed to the teachers; I gave the participants a week to decide to participate in the study. The use of inclusive of field notes, member checking, and tape recordings facilitated the control of biases and reliability. To ensure fairness, the interviews contained the same questions for all participants (see Appendix B), and each participant received approximately 30 minutes of allotted time for the interview. Working at the neighboring study sites provided easy access to participants and data. In addition, I was readily available to answer participants' questions in relation to individual concerns. I was aware of the Jolly Phonics literacy intervention program and anticipated a positive

outcome of the study. I addressed this bias in the honest reporting of the findings and any unexpected results. Data provided were not partial to reflect my perception of the expected outcome, but the actual results of the program evaluation

Data Analysis Methods

Analysis of data took place shortly after the interviews to facilitate current and accurate information. There were no themes prior to coding. The Microsoft tool bars were used to color-code details based on transcriptions, in an effort to identify emerging minor and major themes. Similar responses based on each question were highlighted with the same color to identify patterns of relationships. Member checking facilitated clarity and accuracy of field notes and, after the transcriptions and coding, to validate the information and themes from interviews. For confidentiality purposes, participants edited personal transcripts. According to Creswell (2012), member checking allows for reliability of the report when an individual or group of participants edits data collected and analyzed in a study. Discussion reflected issues related to the fairness of interpretations and themes, which emerged from field notes and recordings. The themes obtained aided in the verification of teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy at Grades 1-3. Students' scores on standardized and non- standardized assessments at Grades 1 and 3 provided a means to identify evidence of local problem. Revisions were necessary to identify any discrepant case. The data collected corresponded with the research questions. The questions were aligned with the theoretical base to evaluate the effectiveness of the USAID support Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3.

Results of one-on-one interviews provided opportunity to examine recorded verbatim responses and field notes for each question (See Appendix B). Discrepant cases are defined as those cases that are contradictory to the patterns and themes I could discover through my research. Discrepancies considered conflicting or an exception to patterns and themes may alter patterns and themes found in data. The researcher did not identify any discrepant case while analyzing the data. Students' scores on standardized and non standardized assessments at Grades 1- 3 ascertained the evidence of the context of the local problem.

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations

The results of the study reflected limitations that the research was only in two schools, thus preventing any comparison of findings with other institutions exposed to the USAID support literacy Jolly Phonics program. The research comprised of participants Grades 1-3, eliminating other teachers of the academic population associated with the program. The sample size of the teachers participating in the study was small in relation to the number of schools facilitating the use of the Jolly Phonics program on the Region 1V School District. The evaluation of the program only involved Grades 1-3. The program evaluation limited the researcher as an internal evaluator. The results of the study may not be generalizable with other schools.

Data Analysis Results

The project study methodology applied a summative program evaluation to collect data from a sample of a combination of eight teachers at two schools who have used the Jolly Phonics with early learners of Grades 1-3. The purpose of selecting the

qualitative approach was to collect rich, detailed information, which provided insights into an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly phonics on literacy. The triangulation of data subsequent to the review of literature, de-identified scores, and interviews served as the findings for this study. The data analysis and findings provided recommendations to assist the two school administrators and the Ministry of Education in making decisions regarding future use of the Jolly Phonics in improving literacy.

Restatement of Research Questions

For the purpose of clarity, the following research questions provided analysis through an evaluation report study.

1. How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3?
2. What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3?

My role in this study was to examine de-identified data of Grades 1-3 students, interview participants, and encourage them to provide information germane to the research questions (Creswell, 2012). I had no previous interaction with the participants in the study. I approached the principals of two cluster primary schools on the school district, and discussed the literacy skills of the students entering grade 1 at the schools. The topic of the project study was highlighted and permission was sought to conduct the project study with the teachers who were familiar with the use of the Jolly Phonics

Program, and the program at Grades 1-3 was thereafter executed. Formal Letters of Permission and Cooperation were signed by me and principals, and approved by IRB.

When permission was granted a faculty meeting was arranged with the teachers who met the criteria for participation at each school to present the purpose of the study. Teachers were informed of confidentiality measures to be employed through removal of names, use of codes, and secured storage areas. Participants were required to sign a consent form outlining their rights, protection, purpose, and procedure of the study (See Appendix C). The teachers' consent forms were collected a week after the initial faculty meeting. After receiving approval from the Ministry of Education's Planning and Research Department and Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # 06-09-15-0243025) to collect data, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured audio-taped interviews with eight teachers over a six -week period. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes. Following the interviews, member checking and transcription of data were done. Data was triangulated to reveal findings.

Data was collected in two stages. De-identified archival data reflecting students' mastery levels of a standardized Grade One Readiness Skills Inventory, and Grade 3 Diagnostic Literacy Tests from 2013- 2014 were examined to identify the local problem. One-on-one interviews with eight participants provided data for 15 semi structured questions related to participants' use of the Jolly Phonics program and the impact of the program on literacy (See Appendix B). The interview process enabled participants to communicate their perceptions regarding the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 at their school. The interviews were audio taped, field notes taken,

and research logs made (Creswell, 2012). All interviews were conducted at the local site at a time convenient to each participant. After each interview, member checking was conducted, and the data transcribed and analysed. The data was analysed by examining participants' responses to the 15 interview questions, and using the Microsoft tool bar to colour code similar responses for each question. Responses based on the research questions were further grouped to identify possible themes and relationships. By following these data collection procedures, the researcher was confident that data obtained would be rich, valid and reliable. The questions are the basis of the analysis and findings.

All eight teachers indicated that the majority or a significant percentage of students entering grade 1 lacked literacy readiness skills at both schools. The four teachers from School G indicated that some students were not ready (See Appendix A). G1 responded that "Majority of them are not ready." G2 said, "About 50% of them are not ready," and G3 stated that "Those who came from the infant department of the school to grade 1 show greater mastery of literacy readiness skills." G4 responded that "some are not ready. Those who are exposed to the program from Infant Department enter grade 1 being more ready." Of the four teachers from School F, three indicated that the majority of students are not ready and one responded that approximately 60% of the students are ready (See Appendix A). F1 stated that "the majority are not ready for grade 1." F2 said, "Approximately 60% are ready and 40% not ready." F3 responded that "the majority are not ready," and F4 said, "Some are not ready." The reasons for students' lack of grade 1 literacy readiness skills include low socio economic parental background and parent

involvement, special needs, no previous infant school education, and little or no phonetic awareness (See Appendix A). All teachers indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics Program on the curriculum. Teachers from School G responded accordingly: G1 said, “The curriculum has been impacted positively,” and G2 responded “Positively and students are able to decode by themselves at times.” G3 said, “There is a positive impact. Students are able to grasp literacy concepts easier, decode and build sight words and comprehension skills.” G4 also reiterated “there is positive impact, it works” (See appendix A). Teachers of School F responded similarly: F1 stated that “It works! Students are more enthused especially with the actions and letter sounds.” F2 said, “it has a positive impact. The children can relate to the activities even decoding on their own sometimes at play.” F3 indicated “positive,” and F4 said “positive” (See Appendix A).

All teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics had a positive impact on their instructional delivery (See Appendix A). G1 stated it has a positive impact in that students learn the letters and the related sounds. G2 highlighted that there is a positive impact on delivery. The teacher is able to incorporate strategies that build phonetic awareness, distinguish letter sounds and related actions. G3 indicated that exposure to the Jolly Phonics allowed her to really understand how to teach phonics and engage the students while developing phonetic awareness. G4 further stated that “students become involved in the learning process due to the activities.” Participant F1 stated, “It makes my class more fun and children enjoy the activities and participate well.” F2 stated, “It has helped a lot. The children get so involved in the actions.” F3 stated that “It helps the

children to see that sounds connect to letters and words.” F4 mentioned that students become involved in learning by using hands-on materials.

All teachers indicated that students respond positively to the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics Program (See Appendix A). Responses from School G: G1 said, “They love it! They Love it! The children participate very well,” and G2 said, “Students are excited. They are able in instances to decode on their own.” G3 indicated that students are decoding even while at play. G4 stated that “the actions stimulate them and grab their interest. The children love it!” Teachers from School F responded accordingly (See Appendix A): F1 said, “students who are usually less responsive are more enthused. The slower ones are better able to develop the basic phonetic skills,” and F2 said “Very well, and parents also share their experiences of how the children are learning to read.” F3 indicated that “they are excited,” and F4 said, “students like when they are engaged and the kit provides this.”

All teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics facilitates the participation all the children in their classes (See Appendix A). G1 stated that “It targets everyone. The program caters to the emergent learner, average student, and lends itself to developing rounded students.” G2 indicated that the program targets all students in that they can use the objects and work at their pace. G3 stated “Yes, but they learn at a different pace. After they learn how to put the letter sounds together they tend to read fluently.” G4 said, “all children can learn using Jolly Phonics.” Participants from School F also responded favorable. F1 said “Yes. It caters to the below average mainly, but it gets the attention of everyone.” F2 indicated that the program targets all, but some students need special help.

F3 said, “It targets all students. They can work at their own pace. The program can be more challenging for the faster students.” F4 said, “It targets all children regardless of their pace.”

All teachers indicated that adequate instructional time was not available to effectively implement the Jolly Phonics program. More time was needed in the instructional day but restricted due to blocked time table scheduling. Teachers indicated that they had to integrate in Language Arts and across the curriculum (See Appendix A). Teachers at School G indicated that adequate resources are available for teachers to creatively use, and to effectively develop literacy skills leading to increased performance (See Appendix A). Teachers of School F however highlighted that more resources are needed especially reading materials (See Appendix A).

The teachers all attested positively to the importance of the resources used in the literacy program (See Appendix A). G1 remarked, “Very important in that concrete materials are used and students are able to manipulate the objects,” and G2 stated, “Very effective. Resources can be used for positive reinforcement.” G3 mentioned that the kit is very attractive and can be used in a variety of ways; for example, storytelling. G4 stated that “the resources are effective. Students can sing along with the CDs, and use the letter and word cards.” Participant F1 said that the resources are effective but should be used in a ratio of 1 kit to 10 students or a small group, so all students can have hands on experiences at the same time. F2 mentioned that the components are effective but the kit should be used at a ratio at 1: 10 students instead of students sharing activities. F3

discussed how actions are related to words. F4 also agreed that the resources are effective in teaching reading to her Grade 2 children.

All teachers alluded to the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program (See Appendix A). Teachers at School G highlighted the need for continuity after Grade 1. G1 indicated that some teachers do not follow up with the use of the program after Grade 1, and the impact would be greater if mandated to be used from Grades 1-3. G2 teacher stated, "I was never a fan of the program but after starting at Grade 1 I became excited because of the impact on early readers. I was converted." G3 participant stated that "the program is effective but would be of greater impact with continuity from Grades 1-3. It was not mandated to be used after Grade 1." G4 said the program was effective but should be used by all teachers from Grades 1-3 and even other slower students."

According to participants of School F, some administrators and teachers are of the view that the Jolly Phonics program should only be used at the infant and Grade 1 level (See Appendix A). F1 felt that if the program is done properly with adequate time and resources the program could be quite effective. F2 teacher indicated that the program has worked. She said, "Very effective. Children are able to syllabicate and decode on their own while at play." The teachers are of the view that the program can be used with any age group lacking basic phonetic skills." F3 teacher pointed out that because of the effectiveness of the program they should design the program for use at any grade level that could assist the students. F4 said the program was effective.

Teachers highlighted similar strengths of the Jolly Phonics Program (See Appendix A). Teacher G1 highlighted the diversity of the components of the program,

aspects of each component related to the senses, repetitions, which serve as reinforcement, letter sound coordination with the actions and the basis for continuation. G2 indicated that the program's kit enables the engagement of the children at their different levels starting at the basic, the active use of the senses when using the resources, and the teaching of one letter at a time as well as the association of letters, letter sounds, words, and sentences. Teacher G3 pointed out the structure of the program, the progressive learning strategy, repetitive nature of the letters and sounds with related actions, and bridge- building skills. She stated that the interactive and attractive kit caters to different learning styles. Teacher G4 highlighted the use of activities to learn the letters and related sounds. Teacher F1 indicated that the program fosters the development of comprehension and phonetic awareness skills. Teacher F2 maintained that the program facilitates children learning through play and manipulation of objects. The use of concrete objects in learning the letter sounds as well as songs, actions, and formation of letters are included in the process. Teacher F3 highlighted the actions, repetitions of letters, connection of letters to words, and the CDs and DVDs. F4 also stressed the use of activities to learn the letters.

Teachers at School G indicated that due to the creole interference with our students and differences in language accent, a few letter sounds could pose a language barrier. The CDs can be more Caribbean in nature to relate to the culture. The creativity and flexibility of the teacher is paramount in ensuring that the children pronounce the letters properly (See Appendix A). G1 suggested that provisions be included for continuation at a higher level than early childhood. G2 teacher said that some letters

might be more easily picked up but there could be a language barrier due to the British accent. The teacher has to assist with pronunciation when using the CD. G3 discussed that language could be aligned to specific culture. Due to the creole interference and language accent a few letter sounds can pose a problem if the teacher is not flexible. G4 indicated that the pronunciation of a few letters is too vague. Teachers of School F have similar suggestions in relation to the language barrier prevention (See Appendix A). F1 teacher indicated that preparation is critical in relation to the language accent on the CD's, which may cause a barrier due to the creole nature and background of our students. Teacher F2 indicated that the program is as good as it is. F3 teacher discussed the need to include more questions at varying levels in the books to develop comprehension. F4 stated that "the pronunciation of a few letters may be confusing to our students. The teachers have to be the facilitator."

Teachers at School G shared similar opinions (See Appendix A). G1 said, "It depends on the grade level of the teacher. Those at the lower level pay more attention or focus on the use of the kit. More or all teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the program." G2 said, "Some teachers may not be aware of the positive impact because the program is mainly used at the lower grades." G3 said, "Some teachers have supported the program well. Others have challenges adapting to changes hence the reluctance in trying the program. Those who have tried the program have embraced it mainly at the lower levels." Participant G4 maintained greater emphasis is placed at the lower level from kindergarten. Teachers at School F indicated that all teachers embrace the program (See Appendix A). F1 said, "Teachers find it quite effective and it is being used," and F2

said, “They have all embraced it because they have seen the positive literacy effect at the school.” Participants F3 and F4 also endorsed the positive response of teachers, especially those who use it from Grades 1-3.

Teachers of School G indicated that administrators have supported the program through provision of the Jolly Phonics kit and workshops to facilitate sensitization and effective use (See Appendix A). G1 however mentioned that the traditional mode of focusing on use only at the lower grades such as Grades 1 and 2 needs to be revisited, since even slow students at grade six can benefit from its use (See Appendix A). Teachers of school F indicated that administrators have also been supportive of the Jolly Phonics program in seeking to improve literacy (See Appendix A).

Teachers’ responded accordingly (See Appendix A). G1 stated, “I was impressed at my first workshop which motivated me to do personal study on literacy. I am able to integrate some strategies in my lesson plans and delivery.” G2 remarked, “I was not privy to the training but assisting a teacher at Grade 1 who was trained stimulated my interest in using the program.” G3 said, “The professional development workshops stimulated me and really taught me how to teach literacy and develop phonetic awareness. This motivation led me to purchase the Jolly Phonics kit for personal use outside of the regular school environs where indicators of literacy success were noticeable. I was able to teach the basic sight words. Some teachers are hesitant because of incompetence but there is the manual which guides the teacher.” Participant G4 also endorsed the use of the Jolly Phonics through professional development workshop. Teacher F1 said, “This aids support and sharing of information,” and F2 said, “It provided instructions on how to use the kit.”

F3 stated that the workshops motivated her and positively impacted curriculum instruction. Teacher F4 stated that there was a positive impact based on the workshops that facilitated demonstrations.

Research Questions

Audio-taped interviews, transcription of discourse, field notes, coding, and member checking were triangulated to identify themes and patterns expressed in the data as having significance to the participants' perceptions of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program, and can be used to facilitate answers to the two overarching research questions.

Research Question 1: How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3?

Interview Questions **1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13** aided responses used to resolve Research Question 1 (See Appendices A and B). All participants indicated that a problem existed regarding the limited Grade 1 readiness literacy skills. The majority or significant percentage of students entering Grade 1 lacked basic literacy readiness skills (See Appendix A). Reasons for students' lack of grade 1 literacy readiness skills included low socio economic parental background, lack of academic parental involvement, special needs, no previous infant school education, and little or no phonetic awareness (See Appendix A). The responses indicated that all participants argued that students responded positively to the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics Program. Responses such as "They love it! They Love it! The children participate very well" and "Students are excited." F3 said that students they are able in instances to decode on their own. F4 reiterated that students are decoding even while at play. The actions stimulate them and grab their

interest (See Appendix A). Teachers from School F responded that generally students who are usually less responsive in other subject areas are more enthused with the use of Jolly Phonics. The slower ones are better able to develop the basic phonetic skills. One teacher highlighted that parents also share their experiences of how the children are learning to read (See Appendix A).

All teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics catered to all the children in their classes (See Appendix A). The program caters to the emergent learner, average student, and lends itself to developing rounded students. They can use the objects and work at their pace. It caters to different learning styles and the multiple intelligences. All teachers alluded to the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program. Based on participants' responses, some administrators and teachers are of the view that the Jolly Phonics program should only be used at the infant and Grade 1 level (See Appendix A). The participating teachers are of the view that the program can be used with any age group lacking basic phonetic skills, but if used at the early grades would eliminate the lack of literacy skills by Grade 3 (See Appendix A).

Participants highlighted similar strengths of the Jolly Phonics Program. These include the diversity of the components of the program, repetitions of letters which serve as reinforcement, letter sound coordination related to associated actions, and the basis for continuation. The program's kit caters to the children at their different levels starting at the basic, the active use of the senses when using the resources, and the teaching of one letter at a time as well as the association of letters, letter sounds, words and sentences. The progressive learning strategy, and bridge- building skills, the interactive and

attractive kit caters to different learning styles. The program targets development of comprehension and phonetic awareness skills. Teachers maintained that the program facilitates children learning through play and manipulation of objects (See Appendix A).

Teachers of both schools indicated that administrators have supported the program through provision of the Jolly Phonics kit and workshops to facilitate sensitization and effective use (See Appendix A). It was mentioned by some participants that the traditional mode of focusing on use only at the lower grades such as Grades 1 and 2, needs to be revisited since even slow students at Grade 6 can benefit from its use. All participants based on responses indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics on students' literacy performance at Grades 1-3. Students are able to improve their phonetic skills overtime, which is paramount to the development of oral language, reading, and comprehension. The de-identified results of the standardized Grade Three Diagnostics Tests given at the end of the academic year also indicated significant mastery in development of literacy skills at both schools (See Appendix A).

Research Question 2: What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3?

Interview Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15 enabled responses to answer Research Question 2 (See Appendix A). All teachers indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics program on the curriculum and instructional delivery. The teacher is able to incorporate strategies that build phonetic awareness, distinguish letter sounds through related actions. G3 indicated that exposure to the Jolly Phonics allowed her to really understand how to teach phonics and engage the students while developing

phonetic awareness. F1 stated, “It makes my class more fun and children enjoy the activities and participate well.” All teachers indicated that adequate instructional time was not available to effectively implement the Jolly Phonics program. More time was needed in the instructional day but restricted due to blocked time table scheduling.

Teachers at School G indicated that adequate resources are available for teachers to creatively use to effectively develop literacy skills leading to increased performance. Teachers of School F, however, highlighted that more resources are needed especially reading materials. The resources should be used in a ratio of 1: 10 Jolly Phonics kit to students or a small group so all students can have hands-on experiences at the same time. The teachers all attested positively to the importance of the resources used in the literacy program. G1 remarked that “very important in that concrete materials are used and students are able to manipulate the objects.” Teachers at School G indicated that due to the creole interference with their students and differences in language accent, a few letter sounds can pose a language barrier. The CD’s can be more Caribbean in nature to relate to the culture. G1 suggested that provisions be included for continuation at a higher level than early childhood.

Teachers of School F have similar suggestions in relation to the language barrier prevention. Teachers at School G shared similar opinions. G1 said, “It depends on the grade level of the teacher. Those at the lower level pay more attention or focus on the use of the kit. More or all teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the program.” G2 said, “Some teachers may not be aware of the positive impact because the program is mainly used at the lower grades.” G3 said that “Some teachers have supported the

program well. Others have challenges adapting to changes hence the reluctance in trying the program. Those who have tried the program have embraced it mainly at the lower levels.” Teachers at School F indicated that all teachers embrace the program. F1 said, “Teachers find it quite effective and it is being used.” F2 said, “They have all embraced it because they have seen the positive literacy effect at the school.” Teachers G1, G3, and G4 have used the Jolly Phonics Program for 4 or more years, and G2 has used it for less than a year. Teacher F1 has used the program for two years, F2 and F3 for three years, and F4 for four or more years.

Themes Identified

Themes were identified through use of the Microsoft tool bar, to color code similar responses based on one-on-one interviews questions. In relation to the local problem the basic theme emerged from the interviews that a significant percentage of students entering grade 1 lacked basic literacy readiness skills (See Appendix A). Analysis of the Jolly Phonics program highlighted pattern of responses reflecting a positive impact on curriculum and instructional delivery. The Jolly Phonics caters to all students who lacked basic literacy skills, the development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension, and listening skills. Workshops that are stimulating and informative even with a and language barrier can be created based on pronunciation of some letters and letter sounds on the CDs. Responses indicated that the Jolly Phonics program is supported by teachers and administrators. Greater focus, however, is mainly placed at the lower grades. Limited instructional time for the Jolly Phonics was linked to blocked

grades timetables. Much time was given to curriculum based content areas associated with targets and standards aligned to master standardized examinations.

Findings

Findings based on the two research questions indicated that the Jolly Phonics has a positive impact on literacy. Findings reflected answers to the research question, (a) How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3; and (b) What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3. Answers indicated a positive impact based on the eight participants' responses (See Appendix A). Research question 1 highlighted teachers' responses to the improvement of students having entered Grade 1 lacking basic literacy skills such as oral communication and identification of letter sounds (See Appendix A). The conclusion was drawn from themes developed through coding after interviews with eight teachers. Teachers from both School F and School G indicated that students learned to decode on their own through concrete experiences. The second research question pointed to a positive impact and the effective use of the strategies involved in the program. Themes emerged from responses reflecting development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension, and listening skills, and professional development workshops that were stimulating and informative.

The findings that the Jolly Phonics program positively impacted students' performance in literacy and the teachers' perceptions that the strategies are effective, are aligned to previous research data that support the use of the Jolly phonics and intervention programs in assisting early struggling readers and development of basic

literacy skills. Reynolds et al. (2011) discussed that specific systematic instruction in phonics during the preliminary years of schooling is an effective basis for teaching children to read. Herold (2011) stated that the method of teaching the reading skills to develop phonetic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension should be systematic. According to White (2011), the Jolly Phonics program embraced the capability to decode and recognize words. Ramsingh-Mahabir (2012) underscored the accomplishment of executing the Jolly Phonics program with students of low socioeconomic background in mixed ability classes.

Evidence of Quality

The validation methods explained in Section 2 were used to ensure the results of the study demonstrated a high evidence of quality. The validation technique was an intense research process, which required the researcher to audiotape participants 'one-on-one interviews with semi structured questions, take field notes, make research logs, transcribe audiotaped information, and facilitate member checking to guarantee that the information is accurate or presents the participant's responses as closely as possible. Creswell (2012) endorsed triangulation measures of validating findings from qualitative interviews. Participants were able to confirm their points of view in order to avoid misconceptions that I might have involved. Member checking is embraced by Lodico, Spaulding, & Voegtler, (2010) because this strategy provided the participants with the opportunity to review field notes, and interview transcripts collected by the researcher. Sample transcripts, which were reviewed by the participants, are included in Appendix B. Interviews were conducted at the local sites at a time convenient to the participant for

approximately 30 minutes. Grade 1 de-identified data examined at both schools revealed and confirmed the local problem that students entering Grade 1 lacked basic literacy skills.

After the interviews were audio-taped and transcribed, field notes and research logs were examined and member checking facilitated. The data were analysed with the use of colour codes to identify themes and patterns of relationships, and removal of participants' names to facilitate confidentiality and anonymity. Themes identified included, (a) a positive impact on curriculum and instructional delivery; (b) the Jolly Phonics targeted all students who lacked basic literacy skills; (c) the development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension and listening skills; (d) workshops were stimulating and informative; and (e) language barrier can be created based on pronunciation of some letters and letter sounds on the CDs. Responses further developed themes that (f) the Jolly Phonics program is supported by teachers and administrators; (g) Greater focus however is mainly placed at the lower grades; and (h) Limited instructional time for the Jolly Phonics was linked to blocked grades timetables. Themes facilitated the discussion of answers for the two overarching research questions, which guided the study. The findings that the Jolly Phonics program positively impacted students' literacy development at Grades 1-3, and teachers' positive perceptions of the integrated strategies represent the interview responses of all eight participants from two cluster schools. Subsequently, these data collection and analysis procedures boosted the researcher's confidence that the data obtained would be rich, valid, and reliable. The summative

evaluation report indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics on literacy development. Recommendations for positive social change were discussed.

Conclusion

Section 2 of this program evaluation report study summarized the research design and approach. The setting of the study provided the selection of participants. Also presented are the steps to protect the rights of the participants in this study. In addition, details about the instrument used in data collection and analytical procedures related to an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 were provided. I addressed the assumptions and potential limitations of the study. Data collection and data analysis results were also communicated. Evidence of quality through means of validation was discussed.

Section 3 contained a review of literature that addressed this project and an outline of the project. Section 3 also discussed implications for social change and the importance of the project to local stakeholders. Section 4 focused on a scholarly discussion on my reflections, recommendations, and conclusions pertaining to this project study. The project's strengths and limitations in addressing the local problem included analysis of what I learned about scholarship, project development, and leadership. In addition, the study showed the overall reflections on the importance of my work on what I learned and implications for future research.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

The project of this study, an evaluation report, is discussed in this section. A significant number of students entering Grade 1 in primary schools of the Region 1V School District were reading below the first grade level (World Data on Education, 2010). Students who were not ready for Grade 1 lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension and recognition of letters. There was a need to study the lack of basic literacy skills at Grades 1-3 through an evaluation of the impact of the USAID support Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3. Dailey (2014) and Joseph (2013) advocated for developing students' literacy skills at the early grades with the view of achieving local and national educational targets.

A summative program evaluation approach was employed. Subsequent to the analysis of data in Section 2, the goals, rationale, supporting literature, project description, evaluation plan, and implications for social change related to the project were discussed. In basic themes from coded information from the interview responses, the participants indicated that the Jolly Phonics program had a positive impact on literacy. The school administrators and the Ministry of Education in can use the results of this study to make decisions regarding future use of the Jolly Phonics in improving literacy for early struggling readers.

Description of Goals

A program evaluation is the study of a program that involves goals and objectives associated with activities designed for intended purposes (Kizito, 2015). The goals of this

project study were to conduct a program evaluation and to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics Program on literacy in Grades 1-3. An evaluation report is usually presented in the form of an executive summary (Lodico et al., 2010). This evaluation report is comprised of an introduction with an overview of the local problem and program evaluation methods, a review of data collected from interviews with teachers, recommendations for the program, and a conclusion and references (“Developing an Effective Evaluation Report,” , 2013). The primary audience will be the faculty involved in the study; the principals of the two schools selected for the study; the representatives from the Ministry of Education; and other stakeholders such as teachers, board chairs, and parents from neighbouring schools.

One-on-one interviews with teachers were conducted to garner the information necessary to provide a deeper explanation of the success or failure of the literacy program. Teachers’ perceptions were sought as to the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program and how the Jolly Phonics program impacted students’ literacy performance in Grades 1-3. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, analyzed, and thematically coded. The main goal of this program evaluation report was to use data analysis and findings to provide recommendations to assist the two school administrators and the Ministry of Education in making decisions regarding the future use of the Jolly Phonics in improving literacy. Nelson (2014) maintained that the results of a summative evaluation can help determine who benefits from a program as well as the degree of the impact of the program on participants.

Rationale

A significant number of students entering Grade 1 of primary schools of the Region 1V School District was reading below the first grade level (World Data on Education, 2010). The GOILP, a Grade 1 readiness inventory, is administered late August to mid-September annually. The Jolly Phonics program was piloted in an effort to improve the literacy performance of students who lacked basic literacy skills in the early grades. According to de-identified data at two cluster schools in the district, the students lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication (GOILP, 2013, 2014). There had been no data collection and analysis for this intervention program. There was a need to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3. Program evaluations enable schools to implement programs that maximise learning outcomes (Qin, 2012). According to Flagg (2013), the purpose of evaluation is to present data for making educational decisions distinctive to a particular situation or setting. Zohrabi (2011) postulated that program evaluation enables the researcher to identify problems and find solutions. An important aspect of a program evaluation is to provide program stakeholders with an overview of the program to be able to assess whether the program is achieving its objectives (Tuckwiller & Childress, 2012). To facilitate this program evaluation, teachers' perceptions of the Jolly Phonics strategies and the impact on students' literacy performance were determined through interviews. The data analysis resulted in the evaluation report, which formed the basis for the project deliverable

outlining the research findings and recommendations to bring about positive social change.

Review of Literature

In the literature review, I examined program evaluations and the evaluation report, which is the genre of the project. Data for a summative program evaluation are collected to measure particular outcomes and to determine how these outcomes relate to the overall judgment of the program (Patton, 2011). According to McNeil (2011) and Sawyer (2012), summative data include qualitative data, such as interviews with participants that encapsulate their perceptions of the program being evaluated. The evaluation report comprised the findings and recommendations of the study.

The process of finding appropriate information for this review of literature commenced after the data analysis results and findings of the study, which initiated the project. I used the terms *educational leadership*, *educational evaluation*, *data management*, *evaluation report*, *activity theory*, *program evaluation*, and *project studies* to search the Google Scholar, Education Research Complete, SAGE, ERIC, and ProQuest databases in the Walden University Library. The Walden library was also used to examine completed dissertations and theses related to program evaluation and project studies. Appropriate citations from related research studies within the last five years provided insightful access to information.

Program Evaluation and Academic Interventions

Educational programs are intended to provide valid and reliable data to facilitate informed decisions. Yong-Lynn (2011) maintained that a program evaluation is a

systematic process of data collection and analyses used to respond to questions regarding programs, events, and policies. A program evaluation should provide rich data about programs. The evaluator must have a clear understanding of the target population and the problems that need to be addressed in the evaluation (Yong-Lynn, 2011). According to Creswell (2012), a program evaluation should be carried out to gain knowledge, make improvement, or for decision making. Knowledge-based evaluations place an emphasis on how the program works and how participants are impacted based on the results of the program. Evaluations focus on the attainment of the program's objectives while improvement associated evaluations are used to examine the strengths and weakness of a program (Zohrabi, 2012). Educational programs need to be evaluated to determine their effectiveness. According to Backlund et al. (2011), more pressure is being placed on academic institutions to validate their programs. Educational programs are often not evaluated due to neglect, lack of expertise or financial resources.

Early academic interventions are usually implemented to close achievement gaps. Tripp (2011) argued that the academic achievement gap is broadening for the students categorized as at risk of `literacy deficit. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate was endorsed, in part, to close achievement gaps (Dee & Jacob, 2011). With the enactment of NCLB, various educational intervention programs have been recommended to help struggling students. At my local sites, students entering Grade 1 lacked basic literacy readiness skills, which positioned them as at risk. Response to intervention (RTI) is the most common academic intervention applicable to any grade level (Cicek, 2012). The ultimate goals of the RTI approach are to provide scientific, research-based instructions,

to monitor and measure student progress in response to the instruction and interventions, and to use these outcomes of students' progress to shape instruction and make educational decisions (Stuart, 2011). The project was guided by the theoretical framework of the activity theory and the constructivist approach to learning. Activity theorists embrace the concept of how organizations are coordinated to effect positive changes (Engestrom, 1987). The activity theory caters to a student centered learning environment where students are contextual subjects involved in cooperative learning (Barhoumi, 2015). Constructivists promote the construction of knowledge through individual and shared interaction (Philips & Volker, 2014).

Four attributes of ethical evaluation identified by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation are propriety, accuracy, feasibility, and utility (Yarbrough, Shulh, Hopson, & Caruthers, 2011). Propriety indicates the need to respect the rights and dignity of all persons involved in an evaluation from participants to executive stakeholders. Accuracy standards are in place to ensure reliability and validity of research. Feasibility standards advance the practice of realistic, tactful, and economical program evaluations. Lastly, utility determines the Joint Committee's Standards benchmarks for guiding and judging program evaluations as products (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). These four attributes steered the development and reporting of the program evaluation associated with this project

The internal reasons for evaluating educational programs are associated with making information available to stakeholders as to how a program is being implemented and if the program is achieving its objectives (Tuckwiller & Childress, 2012). External

reasons for evaluate educational programs are embraced by federal accountability mandates (Frye & Hemmer, 2012). In a study conducted by Karagiorgi (2011), the need for national evaluation structures to guide school improvement and to determine the degree of improvement after implementation was emphasized by teachers. Woodland, Lee, and Randell (2013) and Vanhoof and Van Petegem (2012) mentioned that collaboration facilitates student achievement and evaluation of the process. The type of program should be dependent on the goals of the evaluation (Warren, Vehorn, Dohrmann, Newsom, & Taylor, 2013). The research approach employed for this program evaluation was guided by the fact that qualitative research involves choices of design, data collection through interviews, and analysis (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). The results of program evaluations can help present refinements to existing or future programs (Kushner, 2015).

Program evaluations require effective preparation and monitoring. According to Miller and Dalton (2011), program evaluations are not without challenges, such as ascertaining results and determining the impact. Yocum (2012) posited that the feedback of teachers and administrators play a role in the realization or failure of any intervention program. Dewult, Pahl-Wostl, and Thorsi (2013) and Colker (2014) argued that the school manager is important in the monitoring and evaluation of data. Cousins and Chouinard (2012) and Demetriou and Kyriakides (2012) stated the importance of practical participatory evaluation. Program evaluations are used to scrutinize data to see if program goals are achieved and then provide appropriate feedback to influence decision making regarding program outcomes (Volcov, 2011; Zohrabi, 2011).

Evaluation reports are vital to the evaluation process. According to Nelson (2014), the findings of a program evaluation may be obtainable in different forms. The results of an evaluation report can be made available in graphics or visuals, a written report, a presentation, or a merger of more than one formats. Stakeholders can then be made aware of the results of the program evaluation. Patton (2011) and Grigal, Dwyre, Emmett, and Emmett (2012) stressed the importance of including all stakeholders in the analysis of program evaluation findings. Waters (2011) and Glaser and Laudel (2013) argued that a thorough evaluation with clear criteria will be beneficial to schools in the local setting. Qualitative methods should be an integral part of researchers' repertoire of tools (Leko, 2014; Maher, 2012). Creswell (2012) and Tokmak, Baturay, and Fadde (2013) highlighted the value of qualitative research in obtaining rich data. Techniques such as interviews and observations provide first hand information.

Relevance of the Evaluation Report

The evaluation report is the main artifact of the evaluation process. According to United Nations (2012) and Rousselle (2013), the evaluation report's purpose is to provide transparency and accountability for results, for decision making on policies and programs, for learning, and improvement. An evaluation report is the only evidence for those stakeholders who were not a part of the actual evaluation process to prove that the evaluation actually occurred (Patton, 2011). According to Grigal, Dwyre, Emmett, and Emmett (2012), a research project is of little worth if others are not aware of the research involved. Evaluation reports provide an opportunity for stakeholders to benefit from the findings and recommendations of the study (Grigal et al., 2012). The evaluation report is

a written document that presents findings, conclusions, and recommendations for how the evaluation results can guide program improvement and decision making (“Developing an Effective Evaluation Report,” 2013).

Recommendations in an evaluation report are specific to the program evaluation conducted, as different research methods could bring about different recommendations (Warren, Vehorn, Dohrmann, Newsom, & Taylor, 2013). Three of the commonly used forms of program evaluations are expertise, participant, and objective (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The objective based evaluations are aligned with determining the achievement of program goals (Creswell, 2010). Expertise based evaluations enable an expert in the field to provide feedback about the program (Mertens & Wilson, 2012). The needs of participants are paramount when participants are the focus of program evaluations (Creswell, 2010).

READ 180 is a reading remediation program intended to improve the reading skills of students (Pittman-Windham, 2015). The evaluation report for the READ 180 included the findings of the data analysis and the recommendations for the stakeholders to continue the program. Robinson, Cotabish, Wood, and O’Tuel (2014), and Ball and Christ (2012) contended that evaluations can be effective in increasing the knowledge base of practitioners and influence instructional decisions. Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2011) posited that program evaluation must be suitable for stakeholder audiences. Stakeholders should be able to understand the evaluation process and report.

Evaluation reports provide a basis for liability and validity. Evaluation reports responsibly communicate a program’s accomplishments and areas in need of

enhancement (Zhang et al., 2011). Bean and Lillestein (2012) argued that program evaluations reports reflect the changing roles of school administrators as evaluation reports are crucial to research. Based on the findings of this research, an evaluation report was the best deliverable product of the program evaluation project. This report will share the findings and recommendations to the participants and other stakeholders of the program.

Project Description

Needed Resources and Existing Supports

This evaluation report did not necessitate excessive resources. I functioned as an internal evaluator to facilitate the program evaluation. The participating teachers associated with the use of the Jolly Phonics program at the two selected schools were interviewed one-on-one. Principals of both selected schools and the Ministry of Education provided permission to conduct the study. In the research process, access was gained to examine de-identified data. Walden University's approval of the evaluation report, presented as an executive summary, facilitated the presentation to the stakeholders of both schools. Stakeholders included Ministry of Education representatives, board chairman, faculty participants, parent representatives, faculty representatives from neighbouring schools, and regional coordinator of the Jolly Phonics resources.

Existing support resides with the administrators and faculty in employing the effective use of the Jolly Phonics program. Subsequent to the approval of the evaluation report, a time frame was ascertained to convene the meeting for presentation of the evaluation report, which highlighted the findings and recommendations of the project.

The Ministry of Education endorsed the use of the Jolly Phonics program in primary schools. A final evaluation report is necessary to communicate information to program staff, stakeholders, and funders to support program improvement and decision making (“Developing an Effective Evaluation Report,” 2013).

Potential Barriers and Potential Solutions to Barriers

No potential barriers were expected for the presentation of the program evaluation findings, which will be done at each school. Participants were already informed of the consultation at the completion of the study. Where the participants highlighted having limited resources, the administrators may not be able to purchase the Jolly Phonics kits, which may pose a potential barrier. I recommend that the Ministry of Education provides or subsidizes these kits, and sponsorship from cooperate supporters or sponsors could be potential solutions to these barriers. Administrators may be able to adjust time tables to provide adequate time to effectively implement the Jolly Phonics strategies on a daily basis, which could be a potential barrier. A potential solution would be support classes before or after scheduled classes.

Proposal for Implementation and Timetable

Upon completion and approval of this project study inclusive of the evaluation report, the Ministry of Education, and principals at selected schools involved in the study will be notified and proposal made to present the evaluation report. Oral presentation will be done and questions facilitated. The conference will be held at each local site for approximately 90 minutes. The report will be sent to the Ministry of Education with a view of arrangement for discussion of recommendations. Participants and other

stakeholders will be informed within one week after consent for venue, date, and times are arranged with principals.

Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others

The researcher assumed responsibilities for providing the copies of the evaluation report to stakeholders and arrangement for the venue, along with the date and time for the presentation of findings and recommendations. The principals of participating schools will provide accommodation for the meeting and ultimately monitor to ensure effective integration of the Jolly Phonics program. The Ministry of Education, teachers, and administrators must take responsibility for the outcome of the Jolly Phonics program.

Project Evaluation Plan

This project developed a program evaluation report to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 at two selected cluster schools. The approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program within their schools. A goals based program evaluation research design was used in this study because of the lack of evaluation of the executed program to conclude its effectiveness in attaining the desired goals. Data analysis, findings, and recommendations resulting from one-on-one interviews conducted with teachers regarding their perceptions of the impact of the Jolly phonics program highlighted the effectiveness of the program in light of the overall goal, resulting in a goals based evaluation. The type of evaluation was summative because an evaluation report was created to document and present the results and recommendations of the program. Chyung (2015) contended that summative evaluation aids the explanation of the

degree of the impact of a program on participants. Grayson (2012) indicated that the format of a summative evaluation varies to comprise graphs, charts, and a presentation or written report.

The overall evaluation goal of the program evaluation report study determined the impact of the Jolly Phonics USAID support program on literacy at Grades 1-3. A significant number of students entering Grade 1 at the primary schools lacked basic literacy skills. The Jolly Phonics program was introduced as an intervention to improve literacy at Grades 1-3. The goal of this evaluation report study provided answers to the research questions: (a) How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3; and (b) What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program at Grades 1-3. The two guiding research questions provided analysis of the perceptions of the Grades 1-3 teachers who participated in the execution of the literacy program. Key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, administrators, participants, faculty, parents and local coordinators of the Jolly Phonics resources may use the evaluation report for decision making whether to endorse the program, and implement possible recommendations for improvement.

Project Implications Including Social Change

Local Community

Numerous implications resulted from the product of this project study in an effort to improve literacy. This program evaluation will enable administration and faculty of the two selected cluster schools on the Region 1V School District to collaborate through

professional development workshops to ensure effective use of associated strategies, and instructional delivery affiliated with the Jolly Phonics program. The results of the study should embrace the use of data collection, and analysis to enhance instructional leaders' awareness of the relevance of program evaluation in assessing students' achievements or the outcome of intervention. Social change could result from increased literacy scores from Grades 1-3, giving students, teachers, and by extension the school, greater confidence in facilitating the institutions becoming schools of choice. Support classes could be instituted before and after scheduled school time to assist special students in an effort to ensure that no child is left behind. Social implication could result from formation of parents' circles to foster family literacy which gives added value for student achievement.

Far- Reaching

The evaluation report would provide Ministry of Education with valid and reliable data associated with the school district. Collectively, the recommendations for literacy improvement outlined in the executive summary have the potential to create social change on the entire school district. The program evaluation will serve as a model for the development of recommendations to improve the literacy program for early and struggling readers. Social change could result in the achievement of the national literacy target of 100 % by Grade 4 through early literacy intervention programs. This project will add to the body of knowledge about literacy program for struggling readers. Implications of this study included recommendations for professional development workshops to facilitate strategies for literacy improvement, creating a model of program evaluation

paramount for students' achievements. The broader community will benefit from having more literate young adults who can positively contribute to society and are less likely to become school dropouts, creating greater social challenges

Conclusion

Section 3 included a brief introduction of the project study, rationale, and description of project goals. The review of literature, which emanated from the project, highlighted the specific genre of the project, which is an evaluation report. This program evaluation report informed stakeholders of an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 resulting from data analysis, findings, and recommendations for future modifications. Relevance of the project to the activity, and constructivists' theories of learning, project description, evaluation, and implication for social change were discussed. Social implications spanned the local community, and boarder context to include professional development, and greater awareness of program evaluation to improve attainment of programs goals.

Section 4 will focus on the strengths and limitations of the project and recommendations for alternative approaches to address the literacy problem at the early grades. A scholarly discussion on my reflections, recommendations, and conclusions pertaining to project development, scholarship, leadership and change, and the importance of my work will be presented. The section will conclude with a discussion indicating possible implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Section 4: Reflections and conclusions

Introduction

This section will comprise my reflections and conclusions of my project study. An evaluation report was developed to address the program evaluation findings and recommendations. In this summative review of the program evaluation, I will address the strengths and limitations my project. Other subsections include recommendations for ways to address the local problem and limitations, scholarship, project development, evaluation, leadership, and change. Retrospective analysis of scholarship experienced during the completion of this doctoral study, my ability as a practitioner, and project developer will be discussed. The potential impact of my study on social change will be explored. This section will culminate with implications, applications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths

The study and project are significant because the lack of basic literacy skills among early struggling readers is a global problem that propels researchers and educators to find solutions through intervention programs. At the local study sites, a significant number of students were identified as not ready for Grade 1 because they lacked basic literacy skills such as listening comprehension, recognition of letters, letter sounds, and oral communication (World Data on Education, 2010). The most important aspect of this study was the identification of the problem at two selected cluster primary schools, which may be replicated at other schools in the Region 1V School District. The absence of a

program evaluation of the Jolly Phonics intervention program prompted me to conduct an evaluation to determine teachers' perceptions of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3 at two selected schools. The aim was to find out whether the program was helping the students entering Grade 1 who lacked basic literacy skills, such as recognition of letter sounds and oral communication, as well as facilitating students in Grades 2-3 who need to develop proficiency in basic literacy skills. The strategies and materials used in addition to the teachers' personal views about the program constituted the data.

Collecting and analyzing rich data from eight teachers in one-on-one interviews based on 15 semi structured questions are strength of the strength. The project benefited from the evaluation report, which outlined the findings and recommendations for decision making, and implications for social changes. This evaluation report was also project strength because it was not a published document. As such, the schools and participants are reassured of privacy and anonymity by using codes and by the removal of confidential information. The teachers indicated a positive perception of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy in Grades 1-3, which was strength of the project. All eight teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics program had a positive impact on curriculum and instructional delivery; it caters to all students who lack basic literacy skills; and it significantly aids the development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension, and listening skills. The students are motivated through kinesthetic learning activities resulting in improved reading abilities. Teachers were engaged in practical, enriching, and stimulating activities during professional development

workshops. The scholarly literature linked to theoretical frameworks and the project's qualitative case study designs have positively impacted the scholarly outcomes of the study. The Jolly Phonics program had a positive impact on improving students' literacy performance in Grades 1-3, and the teachers felt that the strategies employed have been effective. The strength of the project is contained within the findings, which support previous literature that recommend the use of the Jolly Phonics to assist struggling readers in the early grades.

Project Limitations

Despite the strengths of the project, there were limitations in the study. The research was only in two cluster schools, thus averting any comparison of findings with other institutions exposed to the Jolly Phonics program. The results of the study may not be generalizable to other schools. The study included participants of Grades 1-3, disregarding other teachers of the academic population who may be familiar with the program. The sample size of eight teachers participating in the study was small relative to the number of schools facilitating the use of the Jolly Phonics program in the Region 1V School District. The project study only involved Grades 1-3. The program evaluation was limited to me as an internal evaluator. In addition, adequate time may not have been provided for the effective delivery of the activities connected to the Jolly Phonics strategies due to blocked time tables and the arrangement of curriculum. Financial constraints may limit administrators from purchasing the adequate literacy resources. There was no guarantee that the recommendations would be effected.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

Other methods are recommended to aid in addressing the problem of limited literacy skills at the elementary level. The greatest limitation to this study was the lack of evaluation of the Jolly Phonics program, which was implemented as an intervention to improve the literacy skills of early learners at the primary level. The purpose of the program was to assist students entering Grade 1 who lacked basic literacy skills, such as recognition of letters and letter sounds. Students who progressed to Grades 2-3, and who did not gain proficiency in phonics, reading, and other basic literacy areas were assisted. The structure of the program targeted the development of literacy skills of early learners taking into consideration multiple intelligences. An alternative would include a compulsory program evaluation of intervention programs in order to make informed decision aligned to specific objectives and program goals. It may be advantageous to compare the findings from schools with similar or different profiles. Program evaluation should become a national educational focus providing resources and professional development supervised by the Ministry of Education to ensure continuity in achieving literacy targets. This would address challenges related to inadequate numbers of Jolly Phonics kits, which present administrators with additional financial constraints to purchase additional kits. Collaborative activities would not resign only with administrators.

Schools could evaluate their literacy status and devise intervention support classes before and after regular school schedule. Time-tabling should facilitate the integration of literacy intervention strategies. Schools with literacy challenges could establish a special

academy within the school to address students' reading challenges. Differentiated instruction inclusive of the Jolly Phonics strategies could be applied by trained personnel. Marginal value placed on education by some parents and the community at large impact student achievement negatively. This was given as a reason for the lack of basic literacy skills of some students entering Grade 1. As a means of remediating the problem, family literacy through parents' circles could be introduced as an alternate approach. Service learning projects could be initiated in the school community to assist with students and adult learning.

Scholarship

The doctoral study process provided me with opportunities to learn from the challenges encountered with scholarly writing. Initially, having to find, evaluate, and incorporate peer-reviewed literature into a paper posed a challenge to me. The guided tasks enabled me to understand that scholarship entails the art of collecting, analyzing, and presenting reliable, credible, and current information. I began collecting and analyzing articles as soon as I had an idea of my topic, but I constantly revisited the Walden library to search for recent articles. The use of citations and references reflecting high quality authorship gradually became evident in completed the coursework. I learned that reviewing current literature is paramount in developing scholarly work. As my focus expanded and my curiosity developed through the discovery of more research studies, I became more selective and critically aware of irrelevant information. Feedback from my instructors was now viewed as avenues for greater insights and analysis. The ability to

examine findings and connect that analysis to my own outcomes is an important part of scholarship.

My doctoral proposal forced me to fully recognise and appreciate scholarly work through various revisions requiring clarity and related citation. Scholarship is about acquiring in-depth knowledge that facilitates credibility in an area of interest or specification. I have learned to examine topics and dissertations related to program evaluation, prior to my project. The literature review provided information regarding the correct method of conducting a program evaluation, which the guided genre of my project presented as an evaluation report. I was able to use data from one-on-one teacher interviews to report findings and recommendations fundamental to the impact of the Jolly Phonics on literacy in Grades 1-3 at the two selected schools. Scholarship enabled me to confidently share knowledge and provide guidance in a field of study. My project study afforded me the opportunity to share the outcomes of my project with administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders. Scholarship enabled me to become acquainted with the use of vocabulary of the field of study when writing the project study.

Scholarship fostered a high degree of competence and self-discipline. The Walden University online structure of this doctoral program endorsed the discipline of time management, collaboration, and independence. The rubric and assessment at each stage guaranteed scholarly work and guard the competence of instructors. Having a family and a full time job was not an option for compromising the academic standard of the university. Self-discipline had to be exercised in pursuit of scholarship.

Project Development and Evaluation

Subsequent to the data analysis on the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy, the project was developed as an evaluation report. The findings and recommendations resulted from one-on-one interviews with eight teachers from two selected cluster schools associated with the implementation of the Jolly Phonics Program. De-identified data indicating the readiness of Grade 1 students, and Grade 3 literacy diagnostics tests results from 2013-2014 were examined. The project was presented to the administrators and participating faculty of selected schools in a conference forum. Other stakeholders such as board chairs, teachers, and parents' representatives from neighbouring schools were invited. A copy of the document was sent to the Ministry of Education for examination and possible discussion. Numerous literacy programs are available based on evidence locally and nationally that literacy improvement is needed at the elementary level. As a project developer I was able to confidently recommend the Jolly Phonics program as a viable option for literacy improvement and future program evaluation.

Leadership and Change

Leadership defines ones' autonomy in a specialised area or the ability to guide and transform followers. The doctoral process has inspired and equipped me to foster social change. I have become more knowledgeable about issues of global educational trends and diversity in best practices. The project study created insights regarding program evaluation and the benefits that can be derived through evaluation of summative or formative interventions. Evaluations are paramount to decision making, and future

projections in light of attaining outcomes. Successful schools and programs are the results of effective leadership. Social change should permeate all stakeholders related to the social context.

Analysis of Self as Scholar

Walden University appealed to my aspirations of developing my professional career as an effective educational leader and gaining greater knowledge of research, hence enrolment in the Administrative Leadership doctoral program. My scholarly journey began as I prepared my goal statement with a more formal and reflective writing style. With each class I was propelled to scaffold knowledge that contributed to the development of scholarly writing. I became more aware of writing with detail, integrating reference materials, and analysing data in order to make assumptions.

The skills of using a critical eye to read between the lines soon became a practice. The instructors' feedback and networking with colleagues through the discussion board facilitated the use of scholarly vocabulary which gave me a sense of autonomy in the research field. The doctoral project study solidified interaction with peer-viewed literature, examples of completed dissertations, theoretical frameworks, research methods, and evaluation. Numerous revisions, especially during the prospectus and proposal stages, often led to frustration but have resulted in my emergence as a scholar. The project has deepened my understanding of program evaluations and the procedures for conducting a project study. As an administrator, the ability to now confidently share the benefits of program evaluations is invaluable. I embrace the opportunity of becoming

a lifelong learner. Since knowledge is dynamic, a scholar must seek to unearth new knowledge through a systematic and credible framework.

Analysis of Self as Practitioner

My professional career growth spanned many years as a classroom teacher and middle manager with responsibilities as senior teacher and vice principal. I thought of myself as a facilitator and practitioner. As my career advanced from the classroom and middle management, to that of principal in the last three years, I concentrated on maximising the potentials of my staff, both academic and support, through professional development, and acquisition of knowledge that will improve instructional practices, duties, and self. My engagement in the doctoral process facilitated scholarly insights and experiences, which positively impacted and improved my role as practitioner. I am better able to apply analytical skills to data management, staff development, curriculum planning, and instructional delivery. Through collection and analysis of data related to students and teacher performance, I am better able to make informed decision regarding promotion, deployment, and redeployment of staff.

Data analysis has resulted in the implementation of intervention strategies to address literacy and numeracy concerns at varying grade levels. Support classes are held to assist the weaker students. Teachers collaborate through common planning at each grade level to discuss best practices and results of formative and summative evaluations. Much can be attributed to my project study for the development of my understanding of program evaluation. School administrators encounter daily problems as they attempt to improve student achievement results and recognize shared mission, and vision statements

for their particular institutions and organizations. Decision-making that is substantiated with valid, reliable, credible, and current information is more effective in bringing about the much needed changes in public education. The completion and presentation of my project has authenticated my competence as an emergent scholarly practitioner.

Analysis of Self as Project Developer

I learned the significance of program evaluation through the development and evaluation of my project. The purpose of program evaluation was to describe, obtain, and disseminate data for decision making relevant to a particular educational context (Flagg, 3013). It was important to conduct an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 because there was no previous evaluation of the program since implementation. Two neighbouring cluster schools were selected because of IRB ethical concerns regarding the researcher, as administrator, conducting a research at her workplace. I had to revise and change my local site, and population. Permission was sought from the principals and the Ministry of Education. The procurement letter of permission from the Ministry of Education took longer than anticipated. Subsequently the collection and analysis of data were delayed.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with eight teachers from both schools and de-identified data examined. I had initially anticipated 10 participants. The arrangements for interviews after consent was received but did not go as planned due to closing activities of schools. I had to conduct the interviews at the convenience of some participants. I often became frustrated but learned to embrace the challenges while seeking ways to overcome obstacles associated with project development. Coding the

information provided great insights as to how themes and patterns develop in data analysis. Through the project study, I became more cognizant of the formats for program evaluations. Subsequent to the Section 3 review of literature, which focused on the findings of the data, an evaluation report became the option for the project. As the project developer and upon approval of the information regarding the findings, commendations will be presented to key stakeholders in a forum with a view of convincing administrators to act on recommendations. In accessing the document, it is hoped that the Ministry of Education will be more open to address the program of literacy at the elementary level. This project is a springboard for the development of future projects.

Reflection on Importance of the Study

Developing literacy skills continue to be a challenge for struggling readers at the elementary level in schools, and school districts. In an effort to improve literacy performance, schools continue to implement intervention programs. Unfortunately, a gap in practice exists when these program are not evaluated. Program evaluations are critical to program development. Through this project study, the nature of the problem, related current literature review, data collection and analysis, findings, and recommendations were explored in relation to the program's objectives and goals. The benefits of program evaluations have local and far reaching social transformation. This study initiated an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy. Interviews reflecting teachers' perceptions of the program provided rich data. The research process taught me as researcher to value ethical concerns in an effort to protect the rights of participants. As researcher, I learned to take an unbiased position in order to collect, analyse and

disseminate valid and reliable data. Findings from this study indicated the strengths and limitations of the Jolly Phonics program, implications and recommendations, which will aid informed decision making by administrators' and other key stakeholders.

Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research

This project study comprised an evaluation of the Impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy. The outcomes of the project reiterated that data collection and analysis are paramount in presenting valid, credible, and reliable data, which can guide instructional leaders in decision- making regarding program intervention. Professional development will enable collaboration in meeting program objectives. The incorporation of family literacy and service learning will add value to education, particularly student achievement. The theoretical framework guided by the activity theory, and the constructivist approach will develop awareness about student centered environments. This project provides the opportunity for educators to develop competence in the field of program evaluation. This project study can serve as an example for evaluating other intervention programs that will aid evaluation report in future research. Upon Approval it would be appropriate for me to share this evaluation report with stakeholders.

Conclusion

In retrospect, the project study provided the opportunity for me to critically reflect as scholar, practitioner, and project developer. This section of the project study facilitated analysis of the research study and the project that evaluated the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 in two selected cluster schools. The local problem reflected the limited literacy skills for a significant number of students entering

Grade 1. Participation of eight teachers through qualitative interviews and de-identified data directed the development of the project. The findings and recommendations outlined in the evaluation report can serve as a catalyst for social change locally and far reaching. It is hoped that administrators will become more aware of the importance of making informed decisions based on current, reliable, and valid data. Additionally, the study indicated that collaboration of stakeholders plays a significant role in evaluation and achievement of organizational of goals. The perceptions of the participants revealed a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics on literacy at the early grades, which may pave the way for more scrutiny. This project can serve as a model for future research. Program evaluations are driving forces for positive social change.

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Appendix A: A Summative Program Evaluation Report

The Impact of the Jolly Phonics on Literacy

I conducted a goals-based summative program evaluation to determine whether the Jolly Phonics program used at two cluster primary schools was accomplishing its goal. The goal of the program was to stem the lack of basic literacy skills at Grades 1-3. This evaluation was initiated because no prior program evaluation was conducted to assess the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 on the Region 1V School District. De-identified Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) 2013-2014 data from the two selected schools indicated a significant number of students entering Grade 1 lacked the development of basic literacy skills. A summative program evaluation was used to gather rich data. The theoretical framework employed for the program evaluation embraced Engestrom's activity theory. Dewey, Piaget, and Vygotsky's cognitive and sociocultural theories of learning were examined. Qualitative data were collected and analysed. One-on-one interviews conducted with eight teachers captured their perceptions of the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program. Integration and coded responses facilitated development of themes and patterns leading to the discussion and interpretation of the results based on two guiding research questions.

The foremost outcome derived from this study was my project. The project was a summative evaluation report presented as an executive summary. The evaluation report discussed the local problem of lack of literacy skills of a significant number of students entering Grade 1 on the Region 1V School District. The findings of an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 were further examined.

This executive summary outlined the development and implementation of the project. The program's description, outcomes in relation to the research questions, main findings and recommendations are discussed. The summary concluded with an overview of recommendations for stakeholders' consideration on possible developments for improving program implementation initiatives ultimately resulting in positive social changes.

Program description

Literacy continues to be a challenge for many schools and districts. Educators' mammoth task is to ensure that every child learns. The Ministry of Education has targeted 100% literacy at Grade 4 by 2015 (Jamaica KDID, 2011). Administrators and teachers' undertaking is to apply the necessary skills and resources to facilitate all students' proficiency with the use of the standard English as a measure of literacy.

The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) September (2013) scores of one of the selected schools reported in Table 1 indicated the reading readiness of the students registered in Grade 1. A significant number of these entrants have not mastered the basic reading readiness skills as evidenced by the proficiency of the subskills.

Table 2

School F : Grade One Students Proficiency Performance on Reading Readiness Subskills

Subskills	Number of Students	Percentage
(Phonics)- Identify Letter Names	14	56 %
(Phonics)- Identify Initial Letter Sound	10	40 %
Listening Comprehension/	13	52 %

Follow directions or steps

Oral Language/Communicates clearly	2	8 %
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The assessments indicated that students lacked skills related to letter and sound identification as well as listening skills and oral communication (Development of Education, 2008). Table 2 indicates the rating of the other school on Grade 3 Diagnostics Test given June of the academic year 2014. One class of 26 students did the test. The majority of students did not master the literacy skills related to reading and listening comprehension.

Table 3

School G: Students Performance on Grade 3 Diagnostics Reading and Listening Comprehension Test June (2014)

Levels	Number of Students	Percentage
Mastery	3	11.5 %
Near Mastery	10	38.5 %
Non- Mastery	13	50%

Jamaican Creole or Patois (Patwa) is the core language in many low-income homes. This distinct language, inclusive of a mixture of the Jamaican standard English and African words, often presents a language barrier for struggling readers. Students find it difficult to efficiently apply the phonetic skills to demonstrate literacy development in Standard English. The Grade One Individual Learning Profile (GOILP) showed that a significant number of students entering Grade 1 are lacking basic literacy skills in identifying letters of the alphabet, letter sounds, oral, and written communication (Development of Education, 2008). The introduction of the Jolly Phonics program ensued from many students performing below the national and regional literacy target. The program was endorsed in an effort to remedy deficient literacy skills. No evaluation was conducted to determine the impact of the Jolly Phonics program after implementation. Although there might be a positive or negative perception of the intervention, an analysis of the extent of the impact is needed. According to Flagg (2013), formal evaluations of programs and the education system are critical to the measurement of outcomes.

The Intervention program

Jolly Phonics Program

Jolly Phonics is a marketable program developed in the United Kingdom. The guidelines focus on the development of five main skills related to letter sounds, letter formation, blending letter sounds for reading, identifying sounds for writing, and spelling tricky words (Kwan, 2005). A student-centered approach ensures that students become involved in the teaching learning process linking actions with each of the 42 letter sounds. White (2011) argued that the ability to decode and recognize words is at the core

of the program. The activity theory fosters the strategies embedded in the Jolly Phonics program because of its goal-oriented structure. Subjects or individuals, work towards a tangible outcome. Educators and students characterize the subject or social groups. The object is the shared vision of the program to improve literacy in Grades 1-3. Mediation facilitates collaboration through learning and professional development. The constructivists stressed that learning occurs through the interaction of the student with his surroundings (Ultanir, 2012).

Data Analysis

These two research questions guided the analysis project:

1. How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3?
2. What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3?

The project study procedure used a qualitative descriptive case study to collect data from a sample of a combination of eight teachers at two schools who were engaged in the use of the Jolly Phonics strategies at the early childhood level of Grades 1-3 and participated in related professional development workshops. The qualitative descriptive case study was selected to collect detailed information which provided findings reflecting an evaluation of the impact of the Jolly phonics on literacy at Grades 1-3. The triangulation of data resulting from the review of literature, de-identified scores, and interviews served as the findings for this study. The data analysis and findings aided recommendations to the administrators of the participating schools and the Ministry of

Education in making decisions regarding future use of the Jolly Phonics in improving literacy.

The responsibility of the researcher in this study was to examine de-identified data of Grades 1-3 students, interview participants, and encourage them to provide information relevant to the research questions (Creswell, 2008). The researcher opted not to conduct the study at her place of employment to avert any bias and discrimination of subordinates. The researcher approached the principals of two cluster primary schools on the school district, and discussed the literacy skills of the students entering Grade 1 at the schools on the district. The topic of the project study was highlighted, and permission sought to conduct the project study with the teachers who were familiar with the use of the Jolly Phonics Program, and executed the program at Grades 1-3. Formal Letters of Permission and Cooperation were signed by the researcher and principals, and approved by IRB.

Subsequent to the granting of permission a faculty meeting was arranged with the teachers who were engaged in the use of the Jolly Phonics at each school to highlight the purpose of the study. Teachers were informed of removal of names, use of codes, and secured storage areas as a means of ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were required to sign a consent form outlining their rights, protection, purpose, and procedure of the study (See Appendix C). The teachers' consent forms were collected a week after the initial faculty meeting. After receiving approval from the Ministry of Education's Planning and Research Department and Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB approval # 06-09-15-0243025) to collect data, the researcher

conducted one-on-one semi-structured audio-taped interviews with eight teachers over a six -week period. The interviews were approximately 30 minutes. Following the interviews, member checking and transcription of data were done. Data was triangulated to reveal findings.

Data was collected in two stages. De-identified archival data reflecting students' mastery levels of a standardized Grade One Readiness skills Inventory, and Grade 3 Diagnostic Literacy Tests from 2013-2014 were examined to identify the local problem. One-on-one interviews with eight participants provided data for 15 semi structured questions related to participants' use of the Jolly Phonics program and the impact of the program on literacy (See Appendices A and B). The interview process allowed participants to share their perceptions regarding the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 at their school. The interviews were audio taped, field notes taken and research logs made (Creswell, 2012). All interviews were conducted at the local site at a time convenient to each participant. After each interview, member checking was conducted, and the data transcribed and analysed. Similar responses to each question were highlighted with similar color. The following 15 questions were the basis of the analysis:

1. How would you describe the literacy readiness skills of the Grade 1 students entering your school? Why?

All eight teachers indicated that the majority or a significant percentage of students entering Grade 1 lacked literacy readiness skills at both schools. The four teachers from School G indicated that some students were not ready (See Appendix A).

G1 responded that “Majority of them are not ready.” G2 said, “About 50% of them are not ready,” and G3 stated that “Those who came from the infant department of the school to grade 1 show greater mastery of literacy readiness skills.” G4 responded that “some are not ready. Those who are exposed to the program from Infant Department enter grade 1 being more ready.” Of the four teachers from School F, 3 indicated that the majority of students are not ready and 1 responded that approximately 60% of the students are ready (See Appendix A). F1 stated that “the majority are not ready for grade 1.” F2 said, “Approximately 60% are ready and 40% not ready.” F3 responded that “the majority are not ready,” and F4 said, “Some are not ready.” The reasons for students’ lack of grade 1 literacy readiness skills include low socio economic parental background and parent involvement, special needs, no previous infant school education and little or no phonetic awareness (See Appendix A).

2. How has this Jolly Phonics program impacted the curriculum?

All teachers indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics Program on the curriculum. Teachers from School G responded accordingly: G1 said, “The curriculum has been impacted positively,” and G2 responded “Positively and students are able to decode by themselves at times.” G3 said, “There is a positive impact. Students are able to grasp literacy concepts easier, decode and build sight words and comprehension skills.” G4 also reiterated that “there is positive impact, it works” (See appendix A). Teachers of School F responded similarly: F1 stated that “It works! Students are more enthused especially with the actions and letter sounds.” F2 said, “it has a positive impact. The

children can relate to the activities even decoding on their own sometimes at play.” F3 indicated “positive” and F4 said “positive” (See appendix A).

3. How does this Jolly Phonics program impact your instructional delivery?

All teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics had a positive impact on their instructional delivery (See Appendix A). G1 stated it has a positive impact in that students learn the letters and the related sounds. G2 highlighted that there is a positive impact on delivery. The teacher is able to incorporate strategies that build phonetic awareness, distinguish letter sounds and related actions. G3 indicated that exposure to the Jolly Phonics allowed her to really understand how to teach phonics and engage the students while developing phonetic awareness. G4 further stated that “students become involved in the learning process due to the activities.” Participant F1 stated “It makes my class is more fun and children enjoy the activities and participate well.” F2 stated “It has helped a lot. The children get so involved in the actions.” F3 stated that “It helps the children to see that sounds connect to letters and words.” F4 mentioned that students become involved in learning by using hands- on materials.

4. How do your students respond to the strategies you use that are related to the Jolly Phonics program?

All teachers indicated that students respond positively to the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics Program (See Appendix A). Responses from School G: G1 said, “They love it! They Love it! The children participate very well,” and G2 said, “Students are excited. They are able in instances to decode on their own.” G3 indicated that students are decoding even while at play. G4 stated that “the actions stimulate them and grab their

interest. The children love it!” Teachers from School F responded accordingly (See Appendix A). F1 said, “students who are usually less responsive are more enthused. The slower ones are better able to develop the basic phonetic skills,” and F2 said “Very Well and parents also share their experiences of how the children are learning to read.” F3 indicated that “they are excited,” and F4 said “students like when they are engaged and the kit provides this.”

5. Do you think the Jolly Phonics program targets all the children in your class?

Explain your answer

All teachers indicated that the Jolly Phonics targets all the children in their classes (See Appendix A). G1 stated that “It Targets everyone. The program caters to the emergent learner, average student, and lends itself to developing rounded students.” G2 indicated that the program targets all students in that they can use the objects and work at their pace. G3 stated, “Yes but they learn at different pace. After they learn how to put the letter sounds together they tend to read fluently.” G4 said, “all children can learn using Jolly Phonics.” Participants from School F also responded favorable. F1 said, “Yes. It caters to the below average mainly, but it gets the attention of everyone.” F2 indicated that the program targets all, but some students need special help. F3 said, “It targets all students. They can work at their own pace. The program can be more challenging for the faster students.” F4 said, “It targets all children regardless of their pace.”

6. Do you have adequate time in the instructional day to implement the Jolly Phonics program?

All teachers indicated that adequate instructional time was not available to effectively implement the Jolly Phonics program. More time was needed in the instructional day but restricted due to blocked time table scheduling. Teachers indicated that they had to integrate in language Arts and across the curriculum (See Appendix A). Teachers at School G indicated that adequate resources are available for teachers to creatively use to effectively develop literacy skills leading to increased performance (See Appendix A). Teachers of School F however highlighted that more resources are needed especially reading materials (See Appendix A).

7. Are teachers provided with adequate resources to effectively facilitate increased literacy performance?

Teachers at School G indicated that adequate resources are available for teachers to creatively use to effectively develop literacy skills leading to increased performance. Teachers of School F however highlighted that more resources are needed especially reading materials.

8. In your opinion, how important were the resources to effectively teach reading through the early Jolly Phonics literacy program?

The teachers all attested positively to the importance of the resources used in the literacy program (See Appendix A). G1 remarked, “Very important in that concrete materials are used and students are able to manipulate the objects, “and G2 stated, “Very effective. Resources can be used for positive reinforcement.” G3 mentioned that the kit is very attractive and can be used in a variety of ways, for example story telling. G4 stated that “the resources are effective. Students can sing along with the CDs, and use the letter

and word cards.” Participant F1 said that the resources are effective but should be used in a ratio of 1 kit to 10 students or a small group so all students can have hands on experiences at the same time. F2 mentioned that the components are effective but the kit should be used at a ratio at 1: 10 students instead of students sharing activities. F3 discussed how actions are related to words. F4 also agreed that the resources are effective in teaching reading to her grade 2 children.

9. How effective is the Jolly Phonics USAID Program in improving literacy at Grades 1-3?

All teachers alluded to the effectiveness of the Jolly Phonics program (See Appendix A). Teachers at School G highlighted the need for continuity after Grade 1. G1 indicated that some teachers do not follow up with the use of the program after Grade 1 and the impact would be greater if mandated to be used from Grades 1-3. G2 teacher stated, “I was never a fan of the program but after starting at grade 1. I became excited because of the impact on early readers. I was converted.” G3 participant stated that “the program is effective but would be of greater impact with continuity from Grades 1-3. It was not mandated to be used after Grade 1.” G4 said the program was effective but should be used by all teachers from Grades 1-3 and even other slower students.”

According to participants of School F, some administrators and teachers are of the view that the Jolly Phonics program should only be used at the infant and Grade 1 level (See Appendix A). F1 felt that if the program is done properly with adequate time and resources the program could be quite effective. F2 teacher indicated that the program has worked. She said, “Very effective. Children are able to syllabicate and decode on their

own while at play.” The teachers are of the view that the program can be used with any age group lacking basic phonetic skills.” F3 teacher pointed out that because of the effectiveness of the program they should design the program for use at any grade level that could assist the students. F4 said the program was effective.

10. What are the strengths of the Jolly Phonics literacy program being used at this school to develop literacy at Grades 1-3?

Teachers highlighted similar strengths of the Jolly Phonics Program (See Appendix A). Teacher G1 highlighted the diversity of the components of the program, aspects of each component related to the senses, repetitions which serve as reinforcement, letter sound coordination with the actions and the basis for continuation. G2 indicated that the program’s kit targets the children at their different levels starting at the basic, the active use of the senses when using the resources and, the teaching of one letter at a time as well as the association of letters, letter sounds, words and sentences. Teacher G3 pointed out the structure of the program, the progressive learning strategy, repetitive nature of the letters and sounds with related actions, bridge- building skills. She stated that the interactive and attractive kit caters to different learning styles. Teacher G4 highlighted the use of activities to learn the letters and related sounds. Teacher F1 indicated that the program targets development of comprehension and phonetic awareness skills. Teacher F2 maintained that the program facilitates children learning through play and manipulation of objects. The use of concrete objects in learning the letter sounds as well as songs, actions and formation of letters are included in the process.

Teacher F3 highlighted the actions, repetitions of letters, connection of letters to words and the CDs and DVDs. F4 also stressed the use of activities to learn the letters.

11. What are the ways the early Jolly Phonics literacy program could be improved?

Teachers at School G indicated that due to the creole interference with our students and differences in language accent, a few letter sounds can pose a language barrier. The CD's can be more Caribbean in nature to relate to the culture. The creativity and flexibility of the teacher is paramount in ensuring that the children pronounce the letters properly. G1 suggested that provisions be included for continuation at a higher level than early childhood. Teachers of School F have similar suggestions in relation to the language barrier prevention. Teacher F1 indicated that the program is as good as it is. F3 teacher discussed the need to include more questions at varying levels in the books to develop comprehension.

12. In your opinion, how have the teachers at this school responded to the Jolly Phonics program?

Teachers at School G shared similar opinions. G1 said, "It depends on the grade level of the teacher. Those at the lower level pay more attention or focus on the use of the kit. More or all teachers need to have a positive attitude towards the program." G2-said, "Some teachers may not be aware of the positive impact because the program is mainly used at the lower grades". G3 said, "Some teachers have supported the program well. Others have challenges adapting to changes hence the reluctance in trying the program. Those who have tried the program have embraced it mainly at the lower levels". Participant G4 maintained greater emphasis is placed at the lower level from

kindergarten. Teachers at School F indicated that all teachers embrace the program. F1 said, “Teachers find it quite effective and it is being used”. F2 said, “They have all embraced it because they have seen the positive literacy effect at the school”. Participants F3 of F4 also endorsed the positive response of teachers, especially those who use it from Grades 1-3.

13. In your opinion, describe the administrators at this school support of the Jolly Phonics literacy program as it relates to students’ literacy development.

Teachers of School G indicated that administrators have supported the program through provision of the Jolly Phonics kit and workshops to facilitate sensitization and effective use. G1 however mentioned that the traditional mode of focusing on use only at the lower grades such as Grades 1-2 needs to be revisited since even slow students at grade 6 can benefit from its use. Teachers of school F indicated that administrators have also been supportive of the Jolly Phonics program in seeking to improve literacy.

14. In your opinion, how has participation in the professional development workshops impacted your instructional planning and delivery of the Jolly Phonics program?

Teachers’ responded accordingly: G1 stated, “I was impressed at my first workshop which motivated me to do personal study on literacy. I am able to integrate some strategies in my lesson plans and delivery.” G2 remarked, “I was not privy to the training but assisting a teacher at Grade 1 who was trained stimulated my interest in using the program.” G3 said, “The professional development workshops stimulated me and really taught me how to teach literacy and develop phonetic awareness. This motivation

led me to purchase the Jolly Phonics kit for personal use outside of the regular school environs where indicators of literacy success were noticeable. I was able to teach the basic sight words. Some teachers are hesitant because of incompetence but there is the manual which guides the teacher.” Participant G4 also endorsed the use of the Jolly Phonics through professional development workshop. Teacher F1 said, “This aids support and sharing of information.” F2 said, “It provided instructions on how to use the kit”. F3 stated that the workshops motivated her and positively impact curriculum instruction. Teacher F4 stated that there is a positive impact based on the workshops that provided demonstrations etc.

15. How many years have you taught early literacy at this school featuring the Jolly Phonics approach?

Teachers G1, G3 and G4 have used the Jolly Phonics Program for 4 or more years and G2 has used it for less than a year. Teachers F1 has used the program for 2 years, F2 and F3 for 3 years, and F4 for 4 or more years.

Research Questions

Research Question 1

How would you describe the literacy readiness skills of the Grade 1 students entering your school? Why?

Triangulation was used to identify which phenomena are expressed in the data as having significance to the participants and can be used to resolve the two overarching research questions. Interview Questions 1, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13 focused on responses to answer research question 1. (See Appendix B). All participants indicated that a problem existed

regarding the majority or significant percentage of students entering Grade 1 and lack basic literacy readiness skills (See appendix A). Reasons for students' lack of Grade 1 literacy readiness skills included low socio economic parental background, lack of academic parental involvement, special needs, no previous infant school education and little or no phonetic awareness.

Research Question 2:

What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3?

Interview Questions 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 focused on responses to answer research question 2. All teachers indicated a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics program on the curriculum and instructional delivery. The teacher is able to incorporate strategies that build phonetic awareness, distinguish letter sounds through related actions. G3 indicated that exposure to the Jolly Phonics allowed her to really understand how to teach phonics and engage the students while developing phonetic awareness. F1 stated, "It makes my class more fun and children enjoy the activities and participate well." All teachers indicated that adequate instructional time was not available to effectively implement the Jolly Phonics program. More time was needed in the instructional day but restricted due to blocked time table scheduling (See Appendix A).

Themes identified

The following are basic themes or patterns which emerged from the responses as coding was done coded with each interview question.

1. Some students entering Grade 1 lack basic literacy readiness skills.

2. The Jolly Phonics has a positive impact on curriculum and instructional delivery.
3. The Jolly Phonics targets all students who lack basic literacy skills.
4. The Jolly Phonics develops phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension and listening skills.
5. The program is supported by teachers and administrators.
6. Workshops are stimulating and informative.
7. Greater focus is mainly placed at the lower grades
8. Instructional time for the Jolly Phonics is limited
9. Language barrier can be created based on pronunciation of some letters and letter sounds on the CDs.

Findings

Findings based on the two research questions indicated that the Jolly Phonics has a positive impact on literacy. Findings reflected answers to the following research questions: (a) How has the Jolly Phonics program impacted students' performance in literacy at Grades 1-3; and (b) What are the participating teachers' perceptions of the strategies used in the Jolly Phonics program in Grades 1-3. Research question 1 highlighted teachers' responses to the improvement of students having entered grade 1 lacking basic literacy skills such as oral communication and identification of letter sounds

(See Appendix A). The second research question pointed to a positive impact and the effective use of the strategies involved in the program. Themes emerged from responses reflecting development of phonetic awareness, writing, comprehension and listening skills, and professional development workshops that were stimulating and informative.

The findings that the Jolly Phonics program positively impacted students' performance in literacy and the teachers' perceptions that the strategies are effective, are aligned to previous research data that support the use of the Jolly phonics and intervention programs in assisting early struggling readers and development of basic literacy skills. Herold (2011) stated that the method of teaching the reading skills to develop phonetic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension should be systematic. According to White (2011), the Jolly Phonics program embraced the capability to decode and recognize words. Ramsingh-Mahabir (2012) underscored the accomplishment of executing the Jolly Phonics program with students of low socioeconomic background in mixed ability classes.

Recommendations

1. The continuation of the use of the Jolly Phonics resources in schools to improve literacy .The findings indicate a positive impact of the Jolly Phonics on literacy based on teachers perception. 2. Compulsory evaluation of intervention programs in order to make informed decision aligned to specific objectives and program goals. It may be advantageous to compare the findings from schools with similar or different profiles.

2. Program evaluation should become a national educational focus providing resources and professional development supervised by the Ministry of Education to ensure continuity in achieving literacy targets. This would address challenges related to inadequate Jolly Phonics kit which present administrators with additional financial constraints to purchase.
3. Schools should evaluate their literacy status and devise intervention support classes before and after regular school schedule.
4. Time-tabling should facilitate integration of literacy intervention strategies.
5. Schools with literacy challenges could establish a special academy within the school to address students reading challenges. Differentiated instruction inclusive of the Jolly Phonics strategies could be applied by trained personnel.
6. Family literacy through parents' circles could be introduced as an alternate approach. Service – learning projects could be initiated in the school community to assist with students and adult learning.
7. Data management tracking students' literacy development through formative assessment.
8. Administrators should provide opportunity for common planning and professional development in relation to the program
9. Program should be introduced at the teacher training level.

I will present the evaluation report to the principals and participants of participating schools, and other stakeholders during a future meeting at these selected schools. I will later present my evaluation report to the members of the Board of Education during another meeting to try to persuade them to provide future funding for the resources to ensure continuation and effective use.

Conclusion

This evaluation report has provided an overview of the project. Program evaluation fosters valid and reliable data paramount to measurement of program objectives. The willingness of participants to passionately discuss their perceptions of the Jolly Phonics proved beneficial in evaluating the impact of the program on literacy at Grades 1-3. Whilst the bias of a positive impact of the program might have existed, the depth of the program needs to be determined. In light of the findings reflecting a positive impact of the program, the onus rests primarily with administrators to use the results and recommendations to create positive social change.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

1. How would you describe the literacy readiness skills of the Grade 1 students entering your school? Why?
2. How has this Jolly Phonics program impacted the curriculum?
3. How does this Jolly Phonics program impact your instructional delivery?
4. How do your students respond to the strategies you use that are related to the Jolly Phonics program?
5. Do you think the Jolly Phonics program targets all the children in your class? Explain your answer
6. Do you have adequate time in the instructional day to implement the Jolly Phonics program?
7. Are teachers provided with adequate resources to effectively facilitate increased literacy performance?
8. In your opinion, how important were the resources to effectively teach reading through the early Jolly Phonics literacy program?
9. How effective is the Jolly Phonics USAID Program in improving literacy at Grades 1-3?
10. What are the strengths of the Jolly Phonics literacy program being used at this school to develop literacy at Grades 1-3?
11. What are the ways the early Jolly Phonics literacy program could be improved?

12. In your opinion, how have the teachers at this school responded to the Jolly Phonics program?
13. In your opinion, describe the administrators at this school support of the Jolly Phonics literacy program as it relates to students' literacy development.
14. In your opinion, how has participation in the professional development workshops impacted your instructional planning and delivery of the Jolly Phonics program?
15. How many years have you taught early literacy at this school featuring the Jolly Phonics approach? Please select one of the following:
- Less than 1 year
 - 2 years
 - 3 years
 - 4 years
 - 4 years or more

Appendix C: Teacher Consent Form

TEACHER CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics program on literacy at Grades 1-3 being used at this school. You were selected as a possible participant because you implemented the program in your grade. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study within 1 week. This study is being conducted by Lorane Moodie-Reid, principal at a neighboring primary school. Lorane is a doctoral student at Walden University.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the impact of the Jolly Phonics program design being used at this school to improve literacy at Grades 1-3.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview. Interviews will be audiotaped. The interview with the researcher is anticipated to take 30 minutes outside of instructional time. 5-10 minutes after the interview will be used for member checking or review of responses to ensure accuracy of information given.

Risks:

The study poses little risk to you. You may feel some stress to have an additional task to complete.

Benefits of Being in the Study:

Participating in the study will help ensure that the instructional strategies being used at this school, particularly at Grades 1-3 will improve literacy.

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Your participation is confidential. Names will not be associated with data instead codes will be used. All records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report that might be published, information that would make it possible to identify you will not be included. Research records will be kept on file at the researcher's home, on the computer and in the office safe. Only the researcher has access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation is voluntary, and your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the administrators, teachers/staff at this school. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Lorane Moodie-Reid. General questions can be submitted to me or my chair now or later. I can be reached at lorane.moodie-reid@waldenu.edu or the researcher's faculty chair is Dr. Kim Nisbett. who can be

reached at kim.nisbett@waldenu.edu. Questions about your rights as participants should be addressed to the Walden representative at 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is 06-09-15-0243025 and it expires June 8, 2016.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Please keep/print a copy of the consent form.

Printed Name of Participant:

Signature: _____

Date:

Signature of Researcher: _____

Date:
