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by

Sharon Abraham

August 2017

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS WITH A
FOCUS IN PHONICS INSTRUCTION

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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Approved by Doctoral Thesis Committee:

Dr. Laveria Hutchison, Chairperson

Dr. Leah McAlister-Shields, Committee Member

Dr. Cameron White, Committee Member

Dr. Christine Beaudry, Committee Member

Dr. Robert McPherson, Dean
College of Education

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Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Although these verses were written many years ago, the power within these words remain true for my journey. It is only by His grace and His power alone that this chapter comes to an end.

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Abstract

Background: Proper literacy preparation for the teacher candidate is critical. More specifically, professionals who instruct early readers should have a strong understanding of phonics in order to effectively deliver instruction to students who can benefit from phonics instruction in both whole group and small group settings. **Purpose:** The purpose of the study is to critically analyze the perceptions of two teachers, one participant and the other as participant-researcher, regarding their phonics instruction preparation and poses the following research questions: 1) What are the perceptions of the two teachers in regards to their preparation for teaching phonics? 2) What phonics coursework did the teachers complete during their preparation program? And 3) How important do you think phonics preparation is? **Methods:** Multiple access points will be used to answer the research questions. A qualitative narrative design case study was conducted and data was collected using a semi-structured interview, participant-researcher self-study to provide an autobiographical account of phonics preparation, along with observations and field notes via the researcher-participant's use of a bias journal. Interview and bias journal data was analyzed using constant comparative analysis. **Results:** The themes emerged which indicated that both participants felt inadequately prepared by their respective university programs to carryout phonics instruction. Additionally, the lack of fluidity and gap in timing between the phonics coursework and fieldwork proved to be disadvantageous to the teacher candidates' ability to retain knowledge of phonics instruction. Finally, the participants' responses shed light on the necessity of having preservice teachers engage in hands-on experiences in order to deepen their understanding and improve their ability to conduct phonics instruction. **Conclusion:** These findings identify the need for change in

teacher preparation programs in order to better prepare preservice teachers for high-quality phonics instruction in the elementary classroom setting.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

“From the very first day of class, a teacher’s instruction affects students’ literacy achievement” (International Literacy Association, 2015, p. 2). Elementary school teachers stand in an important position to influence the development of children’s early literacy skills by involving families, providing literacy rich classroom environments, and using intentional instructional strategies related to literacy.

During the pre-service programs for teacher candidates, they are given strategies to provide the best literacy practices for their future students. Some of these strategies include “studying and demonstrating understanding of historical perspectives, historical and current research studies that address effective teaching practices in reading and language arts, the relationship of phonology, morphology, semantics, and syntax” (Preparing Teachers to Teach Reading Effectively, 2002, p. 6). Along with this, the teacher candidates are given field experiences to transfer their head knowledge to hands-on practice. Field experiences allow pre-service teachers to see content taught in teacher education courses applied in a classroom setting (Grisham et al., 2006; International Reading Association, 2003; NCATE Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning, November, 2010; and Parault, 2005).

Highly effective teacher preparation provides varied field experiences with tutoring, small group and whole-class instruction, and community- and family-based programs. (International Literacy Association, 2017, p. 6). Through these field experiences, pre-service teachers are provided with opportunities to witness student performance, engage in data collection through formative and summative assessments,

and plan instruction that will best meet the needs of the students within the classroom. Field experiences provide an increased understanding of students' knowledge and experiences and how these impact literacy development (Clift & Brady, 2005). Through this study, two preparation sites located in Texas, will have their teacher preparation programs, specifically in literacy, be examined and analyzed.

Program Description

One of the universities of focus, located in south Texas, is heralded "as one of the top professional schools in the country" and sits at the "forefront of changes in education both inside and outside the classroom" (Recreating the Landscape of Education, 2017). For this program, it is not uncommon for students to begin their pre-service teaching section during their first semester of their third year. During the pre-service portion of their teacher education program, students are expected to complete 18 hours in major coursework surrounding education. The classes that students are expected to take range from topics about students with special needs to identifying and discussing sociocultural issues. These 18 hours touch on the variety of topics within the scope of education.

After this, the pre-service teachers step into a year and a half of the professional development sequence which consists of thirty-nine hours. During the first twenty-seven hours, students are known as interns and by their final semester, they are completing their student teaching. The first twenty-seven hours include coursework and placement in an elementary school classroom for approximately one to three days per week. The student teaching portion requires twelve hours of coursework along with a placement in a Pre-K through sixth-grade classroom from Monday through Friday, 7:30a.m. until 3:30pm.

During each of these semesters, the student interns are expected to develop, execute, and reflect on at least two lessons for the first two semesters. During the student teaching semester, they are expected to demonstrate the same skills within 5 different lessons across the different subject areas. After these lessons take place, students meet with their evaluator and discuss strengths, areas of growth, and the overall progress and students' understanding of the content being presented. This space allows for the pre-service teacher to reflect on their own practice and how to move forward in an effective manner. As they complete their student teaching semester, they begin their personal journey in their own classroom. In hopes of capturing this perspective, a university in North Texas will be included as the alternate university site being analyzed through the lens of a graduate from their teacher preparation program.

This particular university offers a Bachelor of Science with a major in interdisciplinary studies accompanied with an early childhood – 6th grade or 4-8 grade teacher certification. Each certification requires its own unique classes that need to be taken in order to fulfill the degree plan. This teacher preparation program “develops highly qualified teachers through a rigorous curriculum with high standards” and has received reports from district administrators that the graduates from this university “are prepared in their first year of teaching as second- and third-year teachers” (College Data, 2017).

Students complete a minimum of 120-126 hours, of which “42 must be advanced” (College Data, 2017). As far as the degree plan, students are expected to take a minimum of 120-123 total hours with twenty-four hours being taken during the professional development school, including field experience and specific coursework. In the same

manner as the other university, student teachers are given feedback based on their execution of planned lessons. With this space of reflection, the evaluator and student teacher are able to engage in discourse surrounding the progress of the student teacher and ways to sharpen and develop their skills in a variety of areas under the umbrella of teaching.

Both of the programs require a specific amount of coursework and field experience that the student teacher needs to complete. This component of fieldwork provides a built-in time for teachers to apply their coursework to the classroom. Although both programs are similar in their coursework and field experience, the differences exist surrounding the content that is being taught by the university professors. Through this study, the perceptions of two individuals and their preparedness to engage with phonics instruction in the classroom will be researched and analyzed.

Guided Reading

The idea of guided reading was birthed in the late 1800s because of the understanding in differences of students and their ability to read. Educators recognized that students were entering into the classroom with a variety of abilities. Therefore, one text in a whole group setting was not able to meet the needs. Consequently, differentiated instruction was needed. New Zealand and Australia forged the way for guided reading to surface in the classroom during the 1980's. To this day, guided reading is utilized as a research-based practice within the classroom. Guided reading takes part during the reading block of the day. Students are grouped, based on their reading level and ability to work through texts. They meet with the teacher for about 15-20 minutes engaging in word work activities and dissecting new texts while finding ways to apply their newly

learned strategies. Some characteristics of these groups include having a sense of fluidity within the groups, in that they are able to change based on the progress a student is making. Along with this, the teacher selects books for groups, models specific reading strategies and critical thinking, and “incorporates explicit vocabulary instruction and phonics or word work” (Fountas & Pinnell, 2010, p. 3).

Word Work

During the block of word work in guided reading, the explicit instruction in phonics is visible. “Phonics instruction provided in a meaningful context that provides multiple anchors to help students learn about words: meaning, spelling, and sound” (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker, & Deffes, 2003). Phonics instruction must be systematic and explicit. Systematic means there should be a progression of letters and their sounds starting with the most useful letter sounds first. When defining the phrase “most useful,” it boils down to the frequency of these letter sounds being found in texts read by students. When looking at the importance of word work within the guided reading portion of the reading block, the results of a study conducted by Pullen demonstrates the effectiveness of explicit word work instruction. In this study, 98 first grade students who were at risk for reading disability were randomly assigned to participate in one of three groups. These groups were identified as “treatment, comparison and control” (Pullen, 2014). The students who were placed within the treatment group received “30 sessions of small-group instruction using manipulative letters to practice decoding skills” (Pullen, 2014). The comparison group received the same small-group reading instruction while having the additional decoding practice omitted from their session. Finally, the control group of students was not given “supplemental small-group instruction” (Pullen, 2014). It was

concluded “that students who received the additional decoding practice with manipulative letters scored significantly better on phonological awareness, decoding, and word recognition skills than students who received incidental decoding practice” (Pullen, 2014). The implications of this study further illustrate the importance of having phonics instruction serve as an explicit portion of the guided reading cycle due to its strengthening of a student’s working knowledge and understanding of words.

Flexible Grouping

The idea of flexible grouping was defined by Radencich and McKay (1995), as “grouping that is not static, where members of the reading group change frequently” (p. 11). When teachers plan for flexible grouping, it is critical for the students’ strengths and needs to be considered in order to best meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom. One defining characteristic of flexible grouping includes the idea that it must cater to the flexible aspect. The flexibility within the groups allows for students to seamlessly move from one group to another, based on their progress or lack of progress. Through this fluidity, it eliminates the possibility of students remaining within the same group for a long duration of time and hopes to foster growth.

Within flexible grouping, students are able to engage in small-group reading instruction. In small groups, students are given the advantage of “interacting with other students but also has the potential for direct and constant contact with the teacher” (Ford, N.D.). Through this model, students are grouped according to their similar ability level, which allows the teachers to meet the needs in a specialized manner while simultaneously prompting them forward in their understanding as a reader. This helps the teacher target

instruction to better meet the needs of the students in a manner that isn't as possible in large-group settings (Ford and Opitz, 2008).

Through flexible grouping, guided reading, and word work, students are able to develop their skills as a reader with a focus on word formation and sounds, along with tools to comprehend a variety of texts.

Reflection of My Teacher Preparation

Before my time in the classroom as a teacher began, my time as a student served as the turning point. Reading and writing drew me in and hooked me. I was always found hurrying to finish the next book and finish my next journal entry. As a fourth grader, my classroom teacher included an incentive of being able to read in the bathtub filled with comfortable pillows of all shapes and sizes. She offered this prize to the top reader of the week. Week after week, my goal was to keep reading as many books as I could in order to secure a place in that tub. My love for reading inspired me through the years and still carries me to this day. Reading has been a consistent tool that I utilized through the years to bring me joy and comfort. Therefore, this passion fuels my desire to ensure all students develop an interest and confidence as a reader. After completing my bachelor's degree, I began to think about all the ways I could inspire my future students as readers. Through this hope, I began to think about all that I had learned and gained through my years at the university.

Reflecting on my own development as a teacher, I think back to my days during my teacher preparation program, specifically in literacy. I was able to engage in courses such as acquisition of language and literacies, reading assessment and development, reading, and teaching English as a second language. During acquisition of language and

literacies, I was exposed to “language structure, sequence, process, cognitive and social aspects of language acquisition and use; language variation” (Applied Learning and Development, 2016). Walking away from courses such as these allowed me to develop my understanding of what was being presented in the textbook. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this would create a gap in my ability to translate this head knowledge into practical use. Fast forward to my field experience, I was placed in a kindergarten classroom for three hours a week during my first semester. The expectation of my student teacher role included being present to serve as an aide to the classroom teacher and execute two demonstration lessons through the semester. A typical day consisted of me serving as the person who helped when summoned and completing the daily tasks set before me by my mentor teacher. This same expectation was placed on me as I progressed through the program. For my second semester of student teaching, my placement landed me in a third-grade classroom for two days a week. Again, the role called for me to assist the students who may not have understood a particular concept and work with them one-on-one. I was not presented with any opportunities to recruit a small group of students and work with them on reading. Instead, I moved from one student to another at their seat, as they raised their hands demonstrating their need for help.

As I approached my last semester as a student teacher, I was moved to the third-grade classroom next door and my responsibilities increased exponentially. I was expected to be on campus four days a week and participate in a gradual release of responsibilities and subjects during the twelve weeks. This meant that I took on the core subjects of math, science, reading, writing, spelling, and social studies. During these weeks I was able to gain proficiency in creating a lesson plan, identifying successful

classroom management strategies, along with developing relationships with the students. For two weeks, I was identified as the “classroom teacher” and I performed similar duties as the actual certified teacher. Although I was strengthening my skill set as a classroom teacher, I was not necessarily receiving direct practice or instruction in phonics instruction. Following the student teaching portion of the teacher preparation program, graduation came and went and I began my journey as a corps member for Teach for America during the following fall semester.

One key component of Teach for America’s teacher training includes a six-week intensive summer institute. During this time, corps members are expected to undergo the process of developing a lesson plan, presenting, and receiving feedback from instructional coaches and “veteran district teachers partner with each classroom to provide regular feedback throughout the summer” (Teach for America, 2017). During the day of the trainings, corps members would engage in sessions to receive information about the other components of teaching, while their fellow corps members would be in the classroom instructing. Once they were done, a switch would be made. The corps members who were previously in sessions would now be teaching and those receiving instructional information would transition into the classroom to teach their prepared lesson. Many things were happening simultaneously. It was a delicate balancing act. At the same time, we, as corps members, were not receiving any instruction for small group instruction in literacy. Fast forward to the beginning of fall 2012.

I found myself in Houston, Texas in a fourth-grade classroom filled with twenty-four students who were not proficient readers. The majority of my students were below

grade level, as measured by their reading level. For the few who were able to decode, they did not possess the needed tools to successfully comprehend texts.

This year proved to be one of inadequacy concerning guided reading and instructing students in the components of reading. I met with reading small groups, but often felt this instruction was not necessarily beneficial to my students. Therefore, it was defined as the year of reflection regarding my teacher preparation program. Had I been properly trained, but failed to retain proper skills? Was my experience similar to the many novice teachers who had graduated with me three months prior? After seriously considering these questions, I came to realize that my perception included feelings of ill preparedness.

Moving forward, my two years as a Teach for America corps member came to an end and I moved to Dallas to teach third grade reading and writing. This would be my third year of teaching and I was eagerly awaiting everything I would learn as a reading teacher. However, I was not prompted to track student reading levels or host guided reading groups since this was the academy. At the academy, the majority of students who attended this school were on reading levels well beyond their current grade level. We didn't administer reading assessments to identify where these students were as readers. Along with this, most instruction occurred in whole group settings, through novel studies and providing differentiation for the products students would create. This type of instruction occurred throughout the year and as the year came to a close, I moved back to Houston to teach second grade.

Being placed in a new environment and being bombarded with new tasks may cause a person to experience a learning curve. In contrast to my previous experiences as a

classroom teacher, things began to shift during my first year as a second-grade teacher. I gained experience in understanding the components of reading at a deeper level because more trainings and one-on-one meetings with our campus' reading specialist were immediately initiated in order for me to get a grasp on the tasks that were before me. I had identified areas of growth and wanted to develop and strengthen my understanding in phonics instruction. Therefore, I attended trainings led by master teachers who taught me the ropes of administering the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) and the bits and pieces of hosting a guided reading group including components such as word work, introducing the new book, silent reading with anecdotal notes, and comprehension strategies. These trainings were conducted throughout the first semester of school, which allowed for immediate implementation in the classroom. Along with this, I began my doctoral work at the University of Houston. Through the literacy strand, I was exposed to the building blocks of literacy, beginning with phonics.

According to the level correlation chart, second graders are expected to enter on a level 18 per their DRA score and exit to third grade on a level 28. This reading leveling system "uses objective (quantitative) and subjective (qualitative) leveling criteria to measure text complexity" (Reading A to Z, 2017). In my classroom, I was expected to get my students who are reading at a level 10 up to a level 30 by the end of their second-grade year, per district guidelines. However, according to the reading leveling system, level 10 should have been surpassed during the student's middle of the year in first grade. With numbers like this, it was clear that the students entering were not on grade level when entering into second grade. As a first-year teacher in second grade, this seemed overwhelming because I was unfamiliar with the curriculum that was required to be

taught, along with being unable to successfully provide instruction for my students about the foundational pieces of the English language, including phonics. My awareness of my deficiency grew even more. This was even truer especially since second grade is coined as a year when students continue to develop their reading skills as they learn to read words that are more complex and read more complex texts within a variety of genres such as fiction, non-fiction, fables, and poetry.

However, as mentioned earlier, I underwent trainings and found ways to integrate my understanding into my daily happenings within my classroom. At that point, I had three years of experience under my belt, so I was able to pinpoint my areas of need including support in the classroom to implement phonics instruction and word work during guided reading, exposure to model literacy classrooms, and feedback from my administrators, reading specialists, and coaches. Due to experiences previously mentioned, I eagerly became interested in whether first year teachers are able to provide high-quality phonics reading instruction to students in the primary grades, seeing that these grades occur during their foundational years of literacy development.

Problem Identification

Schools of education with a teacher preparation program should constantly strive to develop themselves and their own practice, and this study will prompt teacher preparation programs to create classes and provide instruction that will allow pre-service teacher candidates to receive essential strategies, information, research-based trends and tools in order to ensure maximum growth in reading for their future students. In our current moment, there is a disconnection between happenings at many higher education teacher preparation sites and the early childhood classroom. From research studies

conducted throughout the nation, negative results have been found regarding effective preparation for pre-service teachers.

In a report prepared by the United States Department of Education, a study of teacher preparation in early reading instruction responded to a “congressional mandate in the Reading First legislation” (Salinger et al. 2010). This mandate prompted for researchers to gather data regarding the preparedness of pre-service teachers in teaching the essential components of reading instruction. This study included a final sample of 2,237 pre-service teachers of which “ninety percent of the pre-service teachers in this sample reported that they planned to teach in the fall 2007” (Salinger et al. 2010). The participants were asked to provide their answers for the given questions regarding components of reading instruction. Based on the data, the researchers concluded, “less than half of the pre-service teachers (46 percent), however, felt that they were “adequately” prepared to teach alphabetics.” Alphabetics is a key component in phonics instruction, as it serves to help children learn the “systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds” (Reading Rockets, 2002). In a study examining the perceptions and knowledge of pre-service and in-service teachers, “pre-service and in-service educators demonstrated limited knowledge of phonological awareness of terminology related to language structure and phonics,” (Bos, C., Mather, N., Dickson, S. et al. *Ann. of Dyslexia* (2001) 51: 97).

The need for quality literacy instruction during the first few years of elementary school is supported by recent breakthroughs, which shows how “brain development is the most significant from birth to age 3” and how the “brain’s capacity develops 90 percent before a child reaches age 5” (Early Childhood Education Degrees, 2013). “From age 3

onward, they should build a vocabulary store of at least 2,500 words per year” (Biemiller & Slonim, 2001). Since this is a phenomenon that should be occurring, it is imperative to have teachers in the classroom that will allow this to come to fruition and develop their students’ reading skills even more. Quality teachers in early childhood classrooms are absolutely necessary, and they must be equipped with the necessary tools in order to ensure students’ development in literacy. However, there are many cases where this type of instruction is being translated into the classroom setting. If the cycle of ineffective teaching in reading continues, students will not receive the necessary components to become proficient in reading.

This qualitative study will address the extent to which universities and other teacher education organizations are preparing their pre-service teachers to effectively demonstrate reading growth from their students over the course of their first year. Specifically, this will shed light on the programs within the Houston area that are developing their pre-service teachers in early childhood literacy. The programs that will be compared are from two universities located in different locations around Texas. Multiple access points will be used to answer the research questions. A qualitative case study, gained through two semi-structured interviews, will be conducted and analyzed to provide a detailed description of the teacher participant’s perceptions of the pre-service journey in learning to teach phonics. The researcher will provide an autobiographical reflection of the academic preparation journey in learning to teach phonics to early readers. Interviews will be analyzed to determine perceptions of phonics preparation within their teacher preparation programs. A self-study will then reflect on a more autobiographical account of phonics preparation. Therefore, this research will allow these

two programs to celebrate their strengths and reflect on ways to transform their areas of growth to their strengths regarding literacy development and preparation for their pre-service teachers.

Study Significance

Since high quality teachers who are equipped with tools to instruct in reading are needed in the classrooms, this study took a closer look at the perceptions of novice teachers in regards to their preparedness to teach phonics from their teacher preparation site. To improve coursework and field experiences for pre-service teachers, teacher preparation site instructors and instructors may use the results of this study. Along with this, changes can occur regarding the type of coursework that is mandated. Therefore, the research questions are

- What are the perceptions of teachers regarding their preparedness to provide phonics instruction in their first year of teaching?
- How do field based experiences to include student teaching impact the planning and the inclusion of phonics in literacy instruction?
- What are literacy teacher perceptions about preparedness to teach phonics as a result of their preservice teaching experience?
- Looking back, what would have been helpful to have in order to prepare for phonics instruction?
- If you were given the task of helping a struggling reader, what is the protocol you would follow? Did you learn this protocol during your teacher preparation program or after you started your teaching career? Explain.

Theoretical Framework

The National Reading Panel “determined that the research indicates that phonics is an essential ingredient in beginning reading instruction” (PBS, 2013). Along with this, it was found that sequential phonics instruction is more effective than phonics instruction that is not systematic or no phonics instruction at all (PBS, 2013). In a study conducted by the National Reading Panel in 2001, a “qualitative meta-analysis evaluating the effects of systematic phonics instruction to unsystematic or no-phonics instruction on learning to read was conducted” (Linnea, et al. 2001). Through this study, 66 participants were included and the control group of students received systematic phonics instruction, while the other students received unsystematic or no-phonics instruction. In sum, systematic phonics “proved effective and should be implemented as part of literacy programs to teach beginning reading as well as to prevent and remediate reading difficulties” (Linnea, et al. 2001).

Benefits of this Study

Through this study, it is the hope that the findings prove to be useful when creating discourse surrounding the coursework and field experience that will be required for preservice teachers. In order to end the cycle of teachers sent out in the field being ill equipped to teach phonics, universities and teacher preparation programs must identify strategies to give the necessary tools to beginning teachers, such as providing more hands-on experiences in leading a small group of students in phonics.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations includes the researcher participating as one of the research subjects. Although an autobiographical account can be utilized in this type of study, it may possibly lend itself to bias in the research outcome.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- **Phonics** – “simply the system of relationships between letters and sounds in a language. When your kindergartner learns that the letter B has the sound of /b/ and your second-grader learns that “tion” sounds like /shun/, they are learning phonics” (PBS, 2017).
- **Phonology** - the study of sound patterns in a particular language
- **Guided reading** - an instructional approach that involves a teacher working with a small group of students who are homogenous in their ability to read

ORGANIZATION OF STUDY

The following chapter discusses research that sheds light on preparedness at the teacher preparation site in regards to phonics instruction. Chapter three will provide information on data collection. The analysis and findings of the data will be presented in chapter four. The final chapter will identify the significance, recommendations for future studies, and connection to leadership.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review presents relevant research concerning the preparation of preservice teachers in supporting their role to provide literacy rich environments and intentional instruction for their students. The following literature review will discuss the current status of preservice programs regarding literacy, and the importance for developing quality teachers who provide strong instruction in the five components of reading. These variables are critical when it comes to effective literacy instruction in early childhood classrooms due to the lack of education and proper teacher preparation, which makes it strenuous to translate research-based theory into instructional strategies. Research related to early childhood literacy components and quality preparation programs was easily accessible, but the research regarding the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs was very limited. More research needs to be implemented in order to ensure preservice teachers are receiving a wholesome understanding of the components of literacy, specifically phonics. In turn, this can be brought into their future classrooms.

Elementary Teacher Literacy Preparation Programs

According to the Aspen Institute, an additional 310,00 teachers enter the workforce each year. This number speaks to the number of children who are receiving novice teachers in their classroom ranging from kindergarten to the high school level. In this particular study, the emphasis of these numbers remains at the early childhood level due to the implications of phonics preparedness. With this parameter being set, it is imperative to see the importance of releasing preservice teachers into the field with

proper tools and strategies to properly conduct phonics instruction in their given classroom.

In 2006, the National Council of Teacher Quality conducted a research study in order to determine the tools that were being provided to preservice teachers in reading. They found that “only one in seven education schools appear to be teaching elementary teacher candidates the science of reading” (NCTE Report, 2006). In order to draw these conclusions, they assessed how much exposure the reading courses at their institution gave to their teacher candidates in the five components of good reading instruction, which include phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension. Education schools received a score of 100 if they provided exposure to all five components, or they received a score of 20 for every component they included. “Only 11 out of the participating 72 institutions were found to teach all the components of the science of reading” (NCTE Report, 2006). Along with this, they found that “only four of the 227 textbooks used in these teacher preparation programs were consistent with the research base” (Joshi et al. 2009). From this study alone, it is important that more research is added to this discussion in order to promote deeper and higher quality preparation for our teachers in the five components of reading. Successful reading programs can only be implemented when the teacher is knowledgeable about what is expected for students to gain in order to become proficient, independent readers.

In March 2010, a group of 162 Australian pre-service teachers were given a questionnaire to respond to. A few of these questions concerned their “attitude towards using phonics instruction” (Ruth Fielding-Barnsley, *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, p. 99-110). Per the study’s results, it was found that most of the teachers

identified with the importance of teaching phonics with reading. On the other hand, most teachers were able to “correctly identify the concept of a phoneme,” but they were not able to exhibit this same knowledge for counting phonemes in words (Ruth Fielding-Barnsley, *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, p. 99-110). Consequently, the researchers found implications for preservice teachers to receive training that would explicitly teach the “sound structure of language” ((Ruth Fielding-Barnsley, *Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties*, p. 99-110).

The strengths of this article include the large sample size that was researched along with the detailed questionnaire that allowed preservice teachers to demonstrate their understanding of the sound structure of language. Because of the large size of participants, it is not viable for a generalization to be made regarding the entire preservice population. At the same time, these participants can be considered to be representative of the population. One limitation of this study includes the fact that this study was conducted in Australia. Due to the geographical differences between this study and the study being presented in this paper, the parallel may be rendered inefficient.

In a study directed by Louisa C. Moats in 2003, time was taken to analyze teacher knowledge and student reading achievement in the classroom over a span of five years. There were 1,400 children in seventeen low performing schools whose reading growth was followed. At the end of each year, they were given “six extensive individually administered test battery, and four other items during the year with a brief set of growth measures on critical skills underlying reading acquisition” (Moats, 2003). The participating teachers were given an annual survey that inquired about their understanding of the science behind reading, along with their instructional strategies

regarding reading. Through the year, the participating teachers received professional development specifically focused on strategies to develop their understanding of reading and the science behind it. At the end of her five-year study, she was able to suggest that “teachers’ knowledge of phonology and orthography is routinely underdeveloped for the purpose of explicit teaching of reading or writing; b) teacher content knowledge of language can be measured directly but is not closely associated with philosophical beliefs or knowledge of children’s literature; and c) teachers’ knowledge of and ability to apply concepts of phonology and orthography is related to primary grade children’s reading and spelling achievement” (Moats, 2003). This shows the importance of having teachers being prepared and developing an understanding regarding the foundational pillars and science of reading. It also shows the importance of ensuring more instruction for teachers surrounding the structure of the English language are readily available.

The next piece of literature was developed in 1997, but it bears strength in its recommendation regarding teacher preparation programs, specifically for early reading instruction. In 1997, the Orton Dyslexia Society printed a research study. Its aim was to review teacher preparation in literacy and provide recommendations in order to ensure teachers were being given the proper tools to succeed in instructing their students in systematic approaches for reading. For skillful reading instruction, these individuals developed a list of recommended core requirements. The first includes giving the teachers a conceptual foundation about the reading process. “Teachers must be provided with a solid foundation regarding the theoretical and scientific underpinnings for understanding literacy development” (Brady & Moats, 1997). To put it simply, preservice teachers must understand the science behind words, the relationship between written and

spoken language, and the “historical evolution of English” (Brady & Moats, 1997). Along with this, they mention the idea that “ teachers must be trained to have a sophisticated understanding of the development of phonological awareness and of the process of learning to read. They need to know how children progress from a lack of awareness about the sound structure of language to a full appreciation of the speech sounds in words” (Brady & Moats, 1997). This is extremely important for teachers because they are able to gain an understanding of where the children are, and what the end goal is. With the end in mind, teachers can develop a strategic plan to get the students to where they need to be. Another recommended requirement includes the knowledge about the structure of language. “In order to teach reading, writing, and spelling, teachers need to understand thoroughly the content of instruction the linguistic units of both speech and print. Teachers must have an introduction to concepts of phonetics, phonology, phonics, morphology, syntax, text structure, and pragmatics” (Brady & Moats, 1997). Finally, they recommend having supervised practice in teaching reading, and this includes allow teachers to acquire the skills of preparing and executing lesson plans in a whole group setting and a one-on-one setting, “multiple observations of peer models at work,” and “translating their knowledge of language and of how children learn to read into relevant activities both for individual children and for classes” (Brady & Moats, 1997).

In a study conducted by William Loudon and Mary Rohl in Australia, there are implications for more opportunities for preservice teachers to practice their knowledge in a real classroom. Within Australia, there is an estimate of 35,000 preservice teachers that exit from a teacher preparation program on a yearly basis across thirty-six universities.

This study occurred in six different phases in order to ensure a thorough study was being held. Phase one “reviewed teacher education programme characteristics” (Louden and Rohl, 2006), which called for researchers to identify the different descriptions of teacher preparation programs based on their website. The second phase dived into a literature review regarding information published on English and consequently, the themes and issues created in the literature review allowed for the creation of the third phase. During this phase, focus groups were created that assembled almost “150 teachers and teacher educators in six states” (Louden and Rohl, 2006). In the fourth phase of this study, the questionnaire surveys were distributed to the participants and its purpose was to examine the perceptions of preservice teachers in regards to “preparedness to teach literacy to a range of students” (Louden and Rohl, 2006). The final two phases are not discussed in this particular piece of literature, but the final component included researches visiting six teacher education programs.

Through this study, it was found that the perceptions of preparedness vary across the board. Many educators identified an issue with not being able to have enough time in the field to practice their knowledge gained within a university class. Also, personal competence in literacy was seen as an area that should be given a bigger priority. Specifically speaking, a large number of participants mentioned the importance of not being properly equipped in literacy teaching strategies.

The Peter Effect

In management theory, the Peter principle was a concept formulated by Laurence J. Peter and a book was published in 1969. From this, individuals derived a new term following the same principle, but adapted the concept for education. The Peter Effect

states that one cannot be expected to provide what one does not possess (Binks-Cantrell, E., Washburn, E. K., Joshi, R. M., & Hougen, M., 2012). This notion was derived from a Biblical story of an instance in the life of Apostle Peter. A beggar had approached Peter and asked for money, but Peter responded and shared that he was not able to give what he did not possess. In a similar fashion to dominos falling, the following idea captures the effect of poor instruction being given at the teacher preparation level. Due to the fact that university professors were inadequately prepared themselves, they were continuing to pass their lack of knowledge on to the pre-service teachers. “Poor instruction due to poor teacher knowledge due to poor teacher preparation has been suggested as one of the major causes of reading failure (Brady & Moats, 1997 Brady, S. and Moats, L. C. 1997). This insight was reviewed through a study in which the researchers applied this notion of the Peter Effect to a reading preparation program.

The main purpose of this study was to “determine whether teacher educators who have a higher understanding of basic language constructs have teacher candidates with a higher understanding of basic language constructs as well” (Binks-Cantrell, Washburn, R. Malatesha, Hougen, 2012, pg. 526-536) The hypothesis held that “teacher educators who do not possess an understanding of basic language constructs would not prepare teacher candidates with an understanding of these constructs essential for early reading success” (Binks-Cantrell, Washburn, R. Malatesha, Hougen, 2012, pg. 526-536) From this study, it was concluded that the Peter Effect in this reading teacher education program was validated because of the data that was yielded. This data showed that “teacher educators who lack a thorough understanding of basic language constructs were unable to give this knowledge to their teacher candidates” (Binks-Cantrell, Washburn, R.

Malatesha, Hougen, 2012, pg. 526-536). The Peter Effect ties into the fact that the basic constructs of the English language must be understood and known by the instructors presenting the information to pre-service teachers. If there is consistency of high-quality phonics instruction being provided at the preparation site, that is more than likely going to have a positive effect on teacher candidates. Then, this effect will eventually translate to their impact as a teacher of the English language when they possess their own classroom.

Impact of Teacher Instruction

When students enter the school setting, they are seeking to receive the necessary skills to become a productive citizen in society. Two of these aspects include being able to read and write effectively. Therefore, the teacher providing instruction plays a large role in whether or not the child is properly equipped. Specifically, the teacher should be demonstrating proficiency in providing reading and writing strategies to the students. These strategies can range from think-alouds to hands-on practice. This portion of the literature review serves to identify the impact of teacher instruction, specifically in literacy.

In 1998, nine first-grade classrooms were observed and their teachers were interviewed in order to identify commonalities between teacher characteristics and student achievement. The teachers who were interviewed consistently provided “a wide variety of high-quality books” (Kendeou, P., Van den Broek, P., White, M. J., & Lynch, J. S, 2009). In this context, high quality was regarded as books that were award-winning and/or children classics. Along with this, there were multiple opportunities for students to engage in authentic reading and writing and provided explicit instruction as well. Out of

the nine teachers observed and interviewed, the three teachers whose students were the “highest achievers taught decoding skills explicitly” (Kendeou, P., Van den Broek, P., White, M. J., & Lynch, J. S., 2009). This demonstrates the strength that lies in providing students with the basic foundation of working with the English language.

Over a span of three years, Janet Hunter hailing from Edith Cowan University sought to unravel the many factors that have some sort of impact on student achievement, specifically in literacy. For this study, “one remote and six remote-rural schools in Western Australia” served as the basis of focus (Hunter, 2015, p. 1). Through observations and interviews, qualitative data was gathered while quantitative data was collected from early literacy assessment tasks that the participating students had to complete. During the three-year duration of this study, sixty students were assessed and tracked for their understanding in literacy. This particular study shares that while all children are most likely to demonstrate progress in these specific subjects, the “extent and rate of progress is dependent on focused and knowledgeable teaching” (Hunter, 2015, p. 1). Therefore, the knowledge a teacher possesses concerning literacy plays a significant role in the attainment of language skills.

In south-central Ontario, Canada, Lyn Sharratt carried out research with a school district of 130,00 students. Sharratt sought to identify the effectiveness, if any, of “creating an intensive professional development of school-embedded Literacy Teachers” (Sharratt, 2004, p. 4). On a daily basis, participants were expected to incorporate the idea of teacher-leadership by working alongside classroom teachers and administrators. They had to be willing “to share assessment literacy and instructional expertise in literacy” (Sharratt, 2004, p. 11). This particular model demonstrated growth for student learning.

Along with this, it provided insight into the important of ensuring there is a partnership that exists between literacy teachers and administrators. The findings in this study support the idea that principals and teachers working alongside one another when “highly skilled literacy teacher-leaders have time and principals take time” to work in a collaborative manner (Sharratt, 2004, p. 14).

All in all, these studies provide support regarding the idea of well-equipped teachers and leaders being present within and outside of the classroom walls. The knowledge base that a teacher has is critical in the progress of a child. This shines light on the importance of having highly qualified and effective teachers in the classroom during the first year of teaching.

Teacher Influence

This segment of the literature review hopes to uncover the importance of understanding the teacher’s role in the classroom for providing quality-reading instruction. The teacher is the main provider of knowledge within the walls of the classroom. The more knowledgeable a teacher is, the more likely students are able to reach higher potential in comparison to a teacher who is ill-equipped, especially in the area of phonics instruction.

“Research shows that teachers being aware of all of the factors that are involved in successful literacy education programs and knowing students’ attitudes towards reading will greatly benefit students’ individual literacy gains” (Van Hees, 2001; Aram, 2006; Manning, 1998; Cremin, 2011; Coddling, 2001). At our present time, not every student graduating from teacher preparation programs are walking away with this knowledge. This is crucial because “One of the key factors noted in all of the research

studies on different types of literacy interventions, was that teacher training and support were an integral part of the success of the literacy intervention used in the classroom” (Van Hees, 2011, Aram, 2006; Cremin, 2011; Balfanz et al, 2004). Research also shows that a teacher’s knowledge and use of current children’s and young adult literature and allowing for self-directed reading in the classroom has an impact on literacy gains in the classroom (Cremin, 2011, 1998; Coddling, 2001). Along with being well versed in providing structured instruction to build the five components of reading, teachers should also have a working knowledge of current literature appropriate for their age group. This can tie into ensuring the students are developing their skills in the five components of reading.

In 2014, the International Literacy Association conducted a research project that involved exploring teacher preparation programs and the differences that existed between what was posted online versus what was being taught in the classroom. In order to gather information, there were surveys given to state officials who answered questions about the status of literacy within the teacher preparation standards. “The interviews revealed that many state officials believed that literacy was embedded in their standards. This is not consistent with what our website search revealed. The majority of interviewees said that teacher preparation course content is not prescribed; however, course content is influenced by state departments of education through the establishment of state standards for teacher preparation” (International Literacy Association, 2015). From this, it is evident there is a disconnection between what is posted within a class description and what it actually taught in the teacher preparation programs. They noticed many individuals left the programs without developing the proper skills to design literacy

instruction and monitor the growth made by the students. As a conclusion, the organization stated one of their implications as being, “All preservice teachers should be required to participate in activities during their practica that develop their ability to design literacy instruction and monitor literacy growth” (International Literacy Association, 2015).

“In 2014-15, 300 Teach For America corps members are teaching more than 6,000 pre-K students nationwide” (Teach for America, 2015). In recent years, Teach for America has partnered with an organization named Atlanta Speech School and has utilized their resources in order to bring preparation for their corps members, along with ensuring these corps members’ students are gaining momentum in their reading. The Atlanta Speech School developed a program titled Read Right from the Start. This program provides strategies to build comprehension and vocabulary, to ensure at and above grade level language is used, effectively pushing in and pulling out language, and “selecting stories and books that encourage language and so much more” (Read Right From the Start, 2015). In order to assess its effectiveness, an independent research company, Mathematica Policy Research, was hired and concluded with these results. “TFA corps members in lower elementary grades (prekindergarten through grade 2) were more effective at teaching reading than other teachers in the same schools, increasing students’ reading scores by an amount equal to 1.3 additional months of school.” (Mathematica, 2015). Along with this, the researchers made it clear that this snapshot was during the second year of the Teach for America corps members’ contract. As an analyst, it is crucial to understand the timing of these results. This occurred during the second year, rather than the first year. This is very important since this research study aims to

understand the effectiveness of a teacher during the first year. Looking ahead, there may be implications that can be implemented that will allow these same results to exist for a Teach for America's first year corps member.

Early Literacy Practices

There are a variety of factors that impact the language development of a child. A child's environment and the amount of their interaction with written and spoken language play a role in a child acquiring language. The acquisition of language for a child occurs at a very young age and around six weeks, the baby "will begin making vowel sounds" (Birner, B., 2012, p. 2). Although the verbal production of words begins around six weeks, the child has been connecting words with meaning mentally beforehand. This section of the literature review seeks to highlight the importance of early literacy development and its role in reading development in the long run.

When a parent reads to their child, it is "believed to be a primary vehicle through which children gain much of their knowledge about oral and written language" (Roberts & Lassonde, 2007). In an attempt to identify the effectiveness of parents' reading interactions with their children, researchers set out to do a focus group study on two families. The subjects who participated in this study were in the researcher's kindergarten class at the Child and Family Research Center and had at least one parent serve on the faculty at the University of Nevada. The participating families were asked to "document their reading interactions at home with their children 3 times a week, for 30 minutes, for 4 weeks" (Roberts & Lassonde, 2007). From this action research study, it was found that the majority of the reading interactions rendered as beneficial to the development of the child's literacy. Along with this, it was found that parents need additional support in

identifying proper books for their child as well as ensuring they know the story beforehand. For further implications, it was found that teachers could provide the necessary support for parents to be effective in their reading interactions with their child at home.

The effectiveness of home-based reading practice was studied in a study completed by Sonnenschein & Munsterman. In this study, five year olds were observed reading two books with a family member. In two thirds of the cases, the five-year-old was reading with a parent whereas the remaining third of five-year olds were observed reading with an older sibling. Along with this observation component, parents were interviewed about the frequency of reading activities that their child engaged in, the phonological awareness of children was tested, understanding of print, and comprehension of the story “were assessed during the spring of kindergarten” (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). Through this study, it was found that the interaction between parent and child during reading played a role in the development of the child’s “early literacy-related skills” (Sonnenschein & Munsterman, 2002). Therefore, it can be concluded that reading between the caregiver and child serves as an indicator of a child’s interest in literacy at a young age. This type of development is critical for the child as it serves as building blocks of a child piecing together letters and sounds while connecting meaning to words.

In this final piece of literature, researchers investigated any possible associations between the times parents incorporated reading activities at home with their children from kindergarten to grade one. There were 1,436 Finnish children that participated along with their mothers and fathers. In order to determine growth, the children’s reading skills

were assessed four different times including the beginning and end of kindergarten as well as the beginning and end of first grade. To test for possible growth from kindergarten to first grade, the children participated in decoding tests individually. Along with this, the use of questionnaires was implemented for the participating parents. Based on the qualitative data from the parents and the quantitative data from the decoding tests completed by the students, it was found that “the better word reading skills children showed in kindergarten, the more shared reading parents reported” (Silinskas, Lerkkanen, Tolvanen, Niemi, Poikkeus, and Nurmi, 2012). This particular study demonstrates implications for early reading skills such as decoding in kindergarten and reading fluency in first grade.

These early literacy practices can begin at home and there is strength in exposing and allowing children to interact with text at a young age. Since they are mentally engaging with language at a young age, it is important that caregivers continue to provide that continual support in making sense of print.

Early Literacy

In an early childhood classroom from kindergarten through second grade, you are bound to come across students reading a book or participating in a sort of literacy activity. These activities are completed because of their implication in developing the students and their literacy skills. The reason behind this phenomenon runs parallel to the idea that early literacy skills are indicative of the child’s ability to demonstrate success in the later primary years.

In a study completed by the National Early Literacy Panel, researchers share that “beginning literacy is highly predictive of later literacy attainment” (Lonigan, C. J., &

Shanahan, T., p. 14). Literacy is virtually implicated in almost every sphere of our lives. This ranges from simple conversations between individuals to sharing a speech and all things in between. The goal of the study was to provide identifiable interventions, activities for parents to incorporate at home, and practices that could be incorporated within the classroom. The panel sought to grant evidence regarding the importance of early literacy and found that “a wide range of interventions had a positive impact on children’s early literacy learning” (Lonigan, C. J., & Shanahan, T., p. 13). They found that reading and writing skills that are developed early on display a clear and longitudinal relationship with later measures of development in literacy. All in all, it was concluded that purposeful engagement with early literacy proved to be effective in ensuring basic literacy skills are attained by children from birth through the age of five.

In 2000, a report presented by the National Reading Panel decided to specifically focus on phonemic awareness and its tie to early literacy. In previous years, phonemic awareness and letter knowledge served as the “two best school-entry predictors” of a child’s ability to learn to read during their first 2 years of receiving classroom instruction (Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P, 2000). In a similar manner as the study previously mentioned, the researchers opted to engage with a meta-analysis technique. There were 52 previous studies that aligned with the questions being posed by the researchers. From these data, comparisons were made regarding whether or not explicit instruction with phonemic awareness had an effect. Through this study, it was found that when students were taught to manipulate phonemes in words, “it was highly effective with a variety of learners” (Phillips, D. A., & Shonkoff, J. P, 2000). These different learners represented

different grades and age levels, but the conclusion showed growth for the students who participated.

The limitation of these studies proved to be the meta-analysis aspect of it. This means that data from multiple studies were utilized to draw a conclusion. Consequently, this type of study can only shed light on general conclusions that could be drawn from multiple studies. It tends to neglect the individual circumstance and any of each original study.

Lee, Grigg, and Donahue set out to identify the effects of students when they are not properly equipped with the literacy skills needed to demonstrate success in fourth and eighth grade. In a study conducted in 2007, it was found that “more than one-third of America’s fourth graders read at levels so low they cannot complete their schoolwork successfully” (Developing Early Literacy: Report of the National Early Literacy Panel, 2007, p. 14). Based on this information, it can be concluded that the students who participated were not given early literacy strategies such as phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Due to the limitation in one or more of these areas, the general population of participating fourth graders were unable to complete their schoolwork. Based on this study alone, it can be concluded that investment in early literacy is critical for students to be successful in their later years.

Intentional Instructional Strategies

Phonics instruction provides a lens for children to connect sound-spelling relationships and how to connect that relationship to reading. Explicit phonics instruction directly teaches sound-spelling relationships and it is systematic in that “it follows a scope of sequence” (Literacy Connects, 2013). Phonics is specifically geared towards

learning “sound-spelling relationships and is associated with print” (Literacy Connects, 2013). When these skills are taught, they can be directly applied to texts and can eventually lead to comprehension. As part of the literature review, this section will support the importance of explicit and systematic phonics instruction.

In 2005, researcher White sought to understand the effect of systematic and explicit phonics instruction on second grade students’ “word reading and reading comprehension” (White, 2005). In this study, there were fifteen grade two teachers taught a progression of 150 written lessons intended to develop decoding skills for students. This was paired alongside a comprehension reading program. The lessons provided a sequential manner in which teachers were to teach the letter-sound relationships, portions for teacher modeling to be implementing, along with practice for students to practice that particular day’s lesson to unfamiliar words. Based on the pre and post-test data, the results showed “the feasibility of improving word reading and comprehension outcomes” through explicit and systematic phonics (White, 2005).

Researchers Laura Tse and Tom Nicholson tracked explicit phonics instruction paired with Big Book reading and its effect on ninety-six second graders. The idea behind Big Book reading is such that a teacher is able to model and demonstrate how to use “semantic, syntactic, and grapho-phonetic cues to learn to read” (Tse, Nicholson, 2014). In comparison to a hand-held size for a book, the Big Book remains true to its name. The book is increased in size, along with the font size. This provides students with a visual aid to accompany their understanding as reading techniques are demonstrated by the teacher. The aim of their research study was to improve the “literacy achievement of lower socioeconomic status (SES) children” (Tse, Nicholson, 2014). In this study, there were

twenty-four small groups of four placed into different reading ability groups. Each of the groups was given a random treatment condition uniquely catered to those individuals. The conditions were as follows: “a control group who received, Big Book reading enhanced with phonics, Big Book reading on its own, and phonics on its own” (Tse, Nicholson, 2014). From their research, they were able to conclude that the group who received Big Book reading paired with phonics made significantly better progress than the students in the other groups (Tse, Nicholson, 2014). Through the use of the Big Book and phonics, explicit and systematic phonics were present in that students were exposed to direct teaching of the use of letter-sound relationships along with moving along in a systematic manner.

Systematic phonics instruction has proven to be effective based on a study conducted in 2001 that sought to compare effects of systematic phonics instruction versus unsystematic or eliminating the concept of phonics altogether (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, Willows, 2001). Since this was a meta-analysis study, prior research studies were gathered and analyzed. This study found that the overall effect of systematic and explicit phonics instruction was moderate. At the same time, they identified a larger effect when “phonics instruction began early than after first grade” (Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, Willows, 2001). It was also found that this instruction provided support in components of reading such as “decoding, word reading, text comprehension, and spelling” ((Ehri, Nunes, Stahl, Willows, 2001). The intentional strategy of providing explicit and systematic phonics instruction proved to be an effective tool in promoting student reading.

Overall, it can be concluded the importance of ensuring a phonics component is present in the literacy block in a teacher’s schedule. This type of instruction can be given

in the whole group setting with the teacher modeling, along with a small group setting. In this context, the teacher can meet students in their place of need and prompt them with questioning that will allow students to rely on previously taught skills. This type of phonics instruction proves to develop reading skills in beginner readers.

To conclude, the teacher plays a critical role when it comes to providing instruction in reading. In order for students to make their proper gains, teachers must be equipped with the proper understanding of the components of strong reading. One major way to ensure this happens is to provide preservice teachers with an understanding of the five components of reading, and giving them field experiences to put the learned concepts into practice. The more practice and exposure that is provided to these teachers in training will only benefit them along with their future students. And, at the end of the day, the importance lies in having children progress as much as they possibly can as a reader throughout the course of a school year. As mentioned earlier, children can make progress, but the extent of their progress depends on the rigor and ability of the teacher to provide quality instruction.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

Through the execution of this study, the overarching goal was to provide an analysis for the current framework for preservice education programs, with a focus on preparation in phonics instruction. This chapter explains the qualitative, narrative, case-study considered and justified the chosen research methods. The research design, participants, and procedures are initially explained. In the latter half of this chapter, the data analysis, ethical considerations, validity, and summary are provided.

Research Objective

The main objective for this study was:

To analyze the perceptions of teachers regarding their level of preparedness to provide phonics instruction

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions of the two teachers in regards to their preparation for teaching phonics?

Research Design

Since the responses to open-ended interview questions and personal narratives were collected and analyzed, the proper approach for this particular study falls under the qualitative design. This type of approach allows for “exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2004).

This qualitative study is in line with the idea that the “researcher identifies topic of

interest; collects information from a variety of sources, often as a participant observer; and accepts the analytical task as one of discovering answers” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 11). In this particular study, the researcher identified a topic of interest due to its connection with her personal experience. Also, the information was collected from a variety of sources including a semi-structured interview, a bias journal, and a personal reflection. Reports of the outcomes in a qualitative study are generally narrative (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 11). As mentioned earlier, the individual narratives that are provided by the participants will grant a focus on the individual and their unique perceptions and experiences. Along with this, the researcher will provide a personal account regarding perceptions of preparedness, which will grant an additional element of a unique narrative.

Characteristics of a Qualitative Study

For a qualitative study, the component of data collection will be “in a natural setting sensitive to people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes inductive and establishes patterns or themes” (Creswell, 2007). The idea of a natural setting also provides for more face-to-face engagement over time and therefore, the researcher can capture a full picture, complete with details. Along with this, the researcher is noted as an instrumental key. Specifically, the researcher is identified as being the individual who gathers the needed information to conduct the study, analyze the data and report the findings (Creswell, 2013, pg. 175). Multiple sources of data have also been identified as a defining characteristic of a qualitative study. The researchers typically “gather multiple forms of data such as interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual information” (Creswell, 2013, pg. 175). For the qualitative method to glean themes, the researcher engages in inductive and deductive

data analysis. Researchers analyze data and identify recurring and comprehensive themes. From this, there is a look back at data from the themes “to determine if more evidence can support each theme” (Creswell, 2013, pg. 175) (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 11) (Bernard & Ryan, 2010, pg. 55). This ties in with the holistic account being viewed as another characteristic of this type of study. The qualitative researcher is able to sketch and define the larger picture as data analysis occurs. In contrast to the researcher bringing the meaning to the data in a quantitative study, the participant instead provides that information and that data serves as a driving force. Emergent design is another characteristic coined by Creswell (2014) which is simply designed as the process of possibly having “some or all phases of the process” changing or shifting after the data collection is underway (Creswell, 2014, pg. 175). Finally, a more personal touch is added through the reflexivity, which calls for the researcher to reflect on how their background “actually may shape the direction of the study” because their own interpretations are unable to “be separated from their own backgrounds, history, contexts, and prior understandings” (Creswell, 2014, pg. 176).

Characteristics of a Narrative

“The stories people tell about themselves are interesting not only for the events and the characters they describe but also for something in the construction of the stories themselves. It is this formative – and sometimes deformative – power of life stories that makes them important” (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992, pg.1). This particular study fell under the descriptors of a narrative study in order to ensure the stories of the participating individuals were shared, recorded and analyzed to identify any commonalities. There have been many recent calls for teachers’ voices and teachers’ knowledge to be valued in

educational research (Casey, 1995). The natural curiosity that exists within the human mind is engaged as stories are shared. Through the narrative method, researchers are able to walk away with “a deeper understanding of people through the stories they tell” (Trahar, 2006, pg. 74). The participants in this study were able to share their personal experiences regarding their teacher preparation program in phonics, along with the additional components of first-year experiences of being placed in their own classroom. With this discourse, it ran parallel with how “findings are derived largely from oral storytelling by the person being studied” in a narrative study (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 9). The ultimate goal of a narrative study is “to find and present themes that indicate important points in the person’s life that truly reveal the individual” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 9).

Characteristics of a Self-Study

In the early 1990’s, self-study emerged as an area of research methods. Self-study was introduced through a study conducted that allowed teachers to reflect on their own practices and skills in teaching (Lassonde, Galman, Kosnik, 2009, pg. 21). Through the years, the idea of self-study became more attractive, as it serves to equip participants with an avenue to reflect. A four-day conference, The Castle Conference, was held in 1996. Australia, Europe, North America, and South America were noted as participants and engaged in discourse about the concept of self-study. The researchers who attended engaged in conversation about the background of this new phenomenon, the proper methodology, and the practice of self-study. This conference was fundamental in “establishing a forum for exploring and expanding the conversations about self-study” (Lassonde, Galman, Kosnik, 2009, pg. 23). Moving forward, the question of the defining aspects of self-study came into play. From this, openness, collaboration, and reframing

were defined as a few of the characteristics that set self-study apart. In a self-study, it is important for the researcher to be open-minded to ideas from others along with a willingness to collaborate with others through dialogue and passing of information. Reframing plays a role in self-study in that it “provides an opportunity for the researcher to think about things differently” along with potentially having a shift of thinking in one’s practice (Lassonde, Galman, Kosnik, 2009, pg. 25). Paradoxical, postmodern, and multiple and multifaceted have also been coined as terms that adequately describe other layers of the self-study method.

Layers of Self-Study Method.

Paradoxical is a layered method of self-study that implies the research will only involve the researcher. However, self-study researchers have determined that the “study is about the individual, and critical friends, or trusted colleagues” (Lassonde, Galman, Kosnik, 2009, pg. 25). From this definition, it is important to note that this reflection journey also requires the input of others in the same learning community in which learners can engage in discourse, negotiate, and construct an understanding. Practically, this approach could possibly look like the other staff members within a certain grade level coming together to discuss and analyze similarities and differences regarding their preparation as a teacher during their preservice years. Although self-study includes the idea of self, it is paradoxical in the sense that it requires the input of others as well. These specific characteristics of a self-study being paradoxical, postmodern, multiple and multifaceted, sheds light on the theory that serves as a foundational piece of the self-study method. It works from the assumption that it is “never possible to divorce the “self” from either the research” (Lassonde, Galman, Kosnik, 2009, pg. 25). Also, self-study prompts researchers to embrace subjectivity and identify relationships that surface, based on the

data collected. Due to the variety available in the self-study methodology, researchers tend to utilize a variety of resources to gather data. This can include but is not limited to autobiographical accounts, narratives, poetry, and others. According to LaBoskey, the multiple characteristics of self-study is defined as: “it is self-initiated and focused; it is improvement-aimed; it is interactive; it includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods; and it defines validity as a validation process based in trustworthiness” (LaBoskey, 2004, p. 817).

Characteristics of a Case Study

Case study research first typically “focuses on an individual representative of a group, an organization or organizations, or a phenomenon, or activity” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 15). For this study, this study focused on a particular situation regarding the preparedness of teachers in phonics instruction. Second, the case is studied in “its natural context, bounded by space and time” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 15). The case study took place following the coursework and field experience of the participants. Third, another characteristic of a case study includes the fact that it is “richly descriptive because it is grounded in deep and varied sources of information” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 16). This study employed direct quotes from both participants through capturing “narratives composed from original interviews” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2017, p. 16). Finally, the case study researcher “seeks to identify themes or categories of behavior and events” as seen in chapter four of this study. Through the use of the semi-structured interview, the bias journal, and personal reflection, data was able to be accumulated and analyzed. Through these different characteristics reflecting a case study as mentioned above, the researcher employed this specific method in analyzing the collected data.

Characteristics of a Semi-Structured Interview

While the participant and researcher will engage in prepared interview questions, the semi-structured interview lends itself to a methodology without limitations to an extent. As the researcher asks questions to gather the narrative from the participant, the response itself can lead to more questions being developed as the interview is taking place. In semi-structured interviewing, the interviewer has questions as a guide, but has freedom to veer from asking one question after another, if the responses lead to it. This kind of interview accesses and collects a piece of the narrative that allows for a conversational style. In a semi-structured interview, there are different branches of questions that can be asked in order to elicit specific responses. These questions are known as grand tour, mini tour, example, experience, and native language questions (Harrell & Bradley, 2009) (Spradley, 1979, pg. 87-89). The grand tour question encourages the participant to begin providing their response. For example, “I am interested in your life when you were growing up. What was your family like?” (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). With a grand tour question, this provides the researcher with background knowledge. The mini tour question implores more specifically about certain elements mentioned in the grand tour that may not have been explained fully in depth. Referencing the example above, example questions ask for particular instances to provide evidence to statements being made. If someone said their parents were strict growing up, the researcher would ask for an example of that instance. Experience questions ask about the different instances the individual engaged with to shape them and their development. For this study, this would look like asking the participant about their experiences in their student teaching semesters. Finally, “native questions ask someone to use his or her own

terminology” (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). If a researcher is trying to learn about unfamiliar concepts, this would be the type of questioning to utilize.

Semi-structured interviews bear strength due to the nature of being able to prepare questions ahead of time, which “allows the interviewer to be prepared and appear competent during the interview” (Cohen D, Crabtree B., 2006, para. 4). Along with this, it provides a space and freedom for informants to “express their views in their own terms” (Cohen D, Crabtree B., 2006, para. 4). Finally, semi-structure interviews have the potential to “provide reliable, comparable qualitative data” (Cohen D, Crabtree B., 2006, para. 4).

Sampling Method

Criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2001, p. 238). For this study, the participant was required to meet predetermined criteria in order to participate which included the participant being a literacy teacher in the elementary school setting while having less than five years of teaching experience. Along with this, the teacher preparation programs the participants underwent needed to be located in the state of Texas. After these particular criteria were met, the individual was invited to participate in the study. Consequently, the individuals who were in a different content teaching area, obtained more than five years of teaching, and completed their teacher preparation program outside of the state of Texas were not invited to participate.

Setting and Participants

The interview took place in the home of the researcher. The subjects of this study consisted of two teachers currently teaching at the elementary level. The participating

teacher graduated from a university in North Texas with a bachelor's degree in elementary education and is currently pursuing her master's degree. This university is a large, 4-year, public co-ed university. It is "located in a small city in a suburban setting and is primarily a residential campus. It offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees." (College Board, 2017).

Teach Org. (2000) states that:

The College of Education offers over 700 hours of field experience working in classrooms, including one full semester of Clinical Teaching; that is twice the field experience of other university programs. The College of Education provides teacher candidates with opportunities to apply their classroom knowledge. They will work with real clients and families in innovative centers and clinics such as the Kristin Farmer Autism Center, the Child Development Laboratory for preschoolers, and the Child and Family Resource Clinic. (para. 3).

The college offers a bachelor of science in interdisciplinary studies from early childhood through sixth grade. More specifically, the teacher preparation program offers the course titled Cross-Curricular (Content Area) Literacy Materials and Resources which allows students "to plan for and implement literacy instruction across the curriculum" (Institution Details, para 4). Students are given an opportunity to select, evaluate, and using appropriate materials to support reading. Along with this, the course titled Principles of Language Study focuses on the science and structure of the English language which includes phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Regarding the teacher preparation pathway, students are required to take courses for two days per week along with two days at their school site. The second semester is fifteen weeks of student teaching internship along with attendance at a weekly seminar.

The researcher graduated from a university, bordering the hill country in Texas, with a bachelor's degree in elementary education, a master's degree in educational leadership, and currently pursuing her doctorate degree in educational leadership with a focus in literacy. Her undergraduate experience took place at a large, 4-year, public university.

This college is "located in a very large city in an urban setting and is primarily a residential campus. It offers certificate, bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees"

(College Board, 2017). The College of Education of this particular university boasts "98 full-time faculty on staff" and "spends among the highest amounts on research of schools across the country, and faculty and students often heavily involved in projects through school centers" ("Education School Overview," para.1). Students engage in pre-requisites for the first 42 hours of their undergraduate degree, complete 18 hours of major coursework related to education, and apply to be admitted to the Professional

Development Sequence (PDS). After students are accepted, 39 hours are required in order to complete this portion of the teacher preparation program. During the PDS portion of the program, the first intern I semester includes 15 hours of coursework and 1-2 days per week in a Pre-K through first-grade classroom. 12 hours of coursework and approximately 2-3 days per week are spent in a second through sixth-grade classroom.

The student teaching section of this program includes 12 hours of coursework with a placement in a Pre-K through sixth-grade classroom, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Instrumentation

Participants participated in a semi-structured interview that provided a space for participants to share pieces of their narrative. In this study, it was critical to collect as much information regarding the preservice experience of the participants since this served as the focus of this study. Their experience will include the courses taken, their personal level of achievement and understanding, and any other components that may be added as the interview takes place. Along with this, a bias journal was utilized in order to identify possible biases that surfaced as the interview took place. This journal was kept in an electronic manner and notes were taken during the interview. After the interview, the notes were again reviewed and additional information was added, as needed.

Data Collection Procedures

The study occurred face-to-face with the participant and the researcher. The participant was invited via phone and accepted the role of participating in this study. The data collection process occurred over the course of a week during the summer of 2017. Before the interview took place, the participant was made aware of the interview structure. This included aspects of being asked questions and being recorded through an audio device. After this, the participants was asked for consent to proceed. The participant obliged and the interview process began. During the interview, the participant-researcher proceeded to respond to the questions for the survey and provided feedback. Then, the researcher provided recordings to a transcription service and within 48 hours, the entire interview had been transcribed and sent back. After the transcription had been received, the information had been read and analyzed by the researcher to identify common themes. After this, the participant was given access to the transcription

and was given freedom to provide additional information or exclude any information that she did not want to be shared. Following the collection of data, the researcher began to process the gathered information through chunking similar ideas, created descriptors for the commonalities, reviewed the data, and began to create overarching themes found in the interview along with the bias journal. These pieces of information were then analyzed to identify possible next steps.

Ethical Considerations

As far as ethics are concerned for this qualitative and self-study case, it was important to ensure that honesty and integrity were present throughout each aspect. Therefore, the researcher provided and explained the purpose and the implications of the informed consent form for the participant. This form acknowledges that participants' rights will be protected during the data collection (Creswell, 2009, p. 89). As mentioned by Creswell (2009), "there is an ethical issue that arises when there is not reciprocity between the researcher and participants." In order to combat this issue, the two participants in this study, including the researcher as the participant, were able to identify ways to reflect on their own practice as a teacher. As an added component of ensuring honesty and integrity were present, there was an emphasis placed on the importance of ensuring that all participants' responses were recorded and utilized as meaningful pieces of data, regardless of its effect on the analysis piece. Therefore, data was not made up and data was not excluded. Also, it was important to ensure objectivity was consistently present in all aspects from the research design to the analysis piece. Consequently, the researcher made it a point to address any potential bias while eliminating the possibility of allowing the bias to surface. In order to combat this, the bias journal was utilized in

order to capture any possible bias that surfaced before, during, and after the interview process. Since human subjects were involved in this study, it was important to reduce any possible harm by taking particular care to provide privacy and confidentiality with the provided responses. In order to accomplish this, the participant was given a copy of the transcript in order to identify any information that she wanted to omit or provide any additional responses. A member check occurs when “data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained” (Cohen D, Crabtree B., 2006, para. 1). Also, member checking provides support to ensure that validity is present in the study (Cohen D, Crabtree B., 2006, para. 1). Other characteristics present for member checking include the fact that it gives the opportunity for the participant “to correct errors and challenge what are perceived as wrong interpretations” and “volunteer additional information which may be stimulated by the playing back process” (Cohen D, Crabtree B, 2006, para.1).

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability

Credibility “involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research” (Trochim, W. 2016, para 3). In particular, this study ensured the adoption of research methods were well-established. The participant and researcher were asked to participate due to a specific criterion that needed to be met. Both individuals had taught for five years or less in an elementary school setting, while having completed a teacher preparation program from a university in Texas. Also, a triangulation of the data was utilized through the use of analyzing the transcript, the collection of information in the bias journal, along with

the self-study component. Transferability refers to the opportunity that exists to replicate the study, if needed. This was addressed through the thorough explanation of the setting, the participants, and the procedures that took place before, during, and after the interview. The dependability of this research study is present due to the research design and implementation being parallel with one another. The researcher utilized a bias journal in order to reduce the effect of investigator bias along with ensuring that the work's findings are the result of the responses from the participant and the participant-researcher. Through these measures that were taken, confirmability was able to be tended to in this study.

Summary

Looking closer, this research idea is important because if done correctly, the insight could possibly show the deficiencies that may or may not exist, along with the strengths that are brought to the table by teacher preparation programs, specifically focusing on phonics preparation and instruction. At the same time, wherever there is a lack of strength in an area, it can give information to those who are in charge of these preservice trainings, and initiate a change that will provide the proper and necessary services to the individuals who undergo their training. Along with this, specific tools can be given to preservice teachers to find ways to collaborate with parents of a child who may be struggling with reading. Case studies can be presented and analyzed to give the teacher candidates exposure and insight on how to address certain situations. All in all, this information will ultimately benefit the children whom we are serving and teaching.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the level of preparedness and analyze the perceptions of teachers regarding their level of preparedness to provide phonics instruction. It further examined the transferability of phonics instructional skills from the university site to the elementary classroom setting through the narratives captured from the participant and participant-researcher. The themes emerged which indicated that both participants felt inadequately prepared by their respective university programs to carry out phonics instruction. Additionally, the lack of fluidity and gap in timing between the phonics coursework and fieldwork proved to be disadvantageous to the teacher candidates' ability to retain knowledge of phonics instruction. Finally, the participants' responses shed light on the necessity of having preservice teachers engage in hands-on experiences in order to deepen their understanding and improve their ability to conduct phonics instruction.

Results for Question One

Stepping into a classroom for the first time renders many emotions varying from joy to the uncertainty that comes with being an educator of young minds. The uncertainty grows exponentially as the reality of teaching phonics is deemed necessary for the students. How do I do this? I never fully learned this. These are all common sentiments expressed by some first-year teachers as they come to grips with the reality of needing to instruct in phonics.

For me, these feelings were all too familiar as they served as a large motivating factor of pushing me to gain knowledge about phonics instruction through the years.

Along with this, my understanding of the literacy gap prompted me forward in seeking to provide the highest quality of literacy instruction for my students, with phonics instruction serving as one of the key pieces. Students who have not developed automaticity in single word reading by the beginning of second grade are at risk for reading failure (Berninger et al., 2003, Berninger et al., 2006). With this knowledge, there was something internally that longed for more understanding and knowledge in order to contribute to my children's ability in reading to grow. Before I arrived in that mental position, I went through the required coursework and hours as mandated by the university.

The field experience segment of my university program occurred over a span of a year and a half. My placement began in a kindergarten classroom for the spring semester, and progressed to a third-grade classroom the following fall and spring semester. During the duration of these semesters, the university plan called for coursework to simultaneously occur. Specifically, we would be on-site during the day and return to the university or a nearby elementary campus following lunch hours and participate in coursework. As far as coursework concerning language arts, the university provided a course on teaching writing and reading assessment and development during the first intern semester, and a reading course during the second intern semester. The reading course provided information on curriculum content and organization, teaching procedures, materials, and reading research. While there was broad information presented, the depth failed to surface due to the rapid pace of twelve weeks in this course. Looking at the experience, the first intern semester required me to be placed in a kindergarten classroom for one to two days a week. During this time, I spent the majority

of my time walking around and checking students' work and assisting students one-on-one to identify any areas of concern. Independently, I conducted one whole-group lesson in mathematics concerning the value of coins. These details are shared to provide a snapshot of the reality of student teaching and the lack of hands-on experience made available to the student teacher during a semester in kindergarten.

Moving forward, the second semester of the intern experience took place in a third-grade classroom. I was granted the opportunity to observe, conduct a few whole-group lessons planned by the classroom teacher, grade papers, and work individually with students. I was not given the opportunity to plan or facilitate a small-group for guided reading nor practice ways to teach phonics to readers who were struggling. Following this semester, I continued in a different third grade classroom at the same school. In the same fashion as my previous semester, I was not granted an opportunity to pull small groups in phonics instruction, or reading in general. This final semester operated in a different manner. I took on subjects one by one, over a course of three weeks, stood-in as the classroom teacher for three weeks, and slowly released subjects back to the classroom teacher one by one. Although I was given opportunity to plan lessons with the teacher, the schedule did not allow for small groups to be incorporated. Over a span of a year and a half, my extent in providing phonics instruction was nonexistent. After graduation, I began my work with Teach for America. During my time in the corps, I was teaching a fourth-grade class and the reality of my knowledge gap became clearer than ever. With three students who had arrived from France, Eritrea, and China, my inability to teach the basics of the English language through phonics were glaringly clear. From that moment on, I was on the hunt for knowledge and practice that would properly equip me because I

was viewing this situation as something that was unfavorable for the students I was given to educate.

As I left my teacher preparation program, I was well-equipped in creating and executing a lesson plan, but I was extremely limited in my knowledge to identify struggling readers, create an action plan, provide meaningful phonics instruction, and assess their understanding. Therefore, my five years of teaching were dedicated to seeking out resources to aid in filling in those gaps of knowledge. This prompted me towards reflecting and understanding my preparation as a teacher. While this serves as my personal story, this may be the narrative of many first-year teachers who exit teacher preparation programs. The universities are providing instruction regarding phonics, but many pre-field teachers graduate with limited knowledge and feel unprepared to teach these concepts (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011).

This study's other participant shared a similar experience regarding their preparation in phonics instruction. Through the interview, she shared her feelings of inadequacy toward instructing phonics to this day, after four years of teaching in the classroom. To provide a snippet of her story, she provided the specific placement and expectations of her field experience. While participating in her student teaching year, she was assigned a PPCD (Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities) classroom for her first semester.

During this placement, she participated in a structured environment that required the teachers to begin their day by gathering the kids from their designated location, having them enter the classroom, provide breakfast and present circle time. During circle time, the students participated in "going over shapes, colors, days of the week, and doing

random songs associated with what was being taught” (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). Afterwards, the speech therapist would enter the classroom and complete a lesson with the students. Following this, the students would exit the classroom to go to recess. Finally, the students would complete one final activity as a whole group and dismiss for the day. Since PPCD was only half a day, the kids would have to leave and the same procedures would be executed for the incoming afternoon class (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017).

Through the duration of the semester, the speech therapist would come and provide any and every whole-group lesson on phonics-based instruction. While the students received phonics instruction, the student teacher was not a participant in the process. She was not expected to step in and identify struggling readers, assess, or provide supplemental instruction to the students. Therefore, the times scheduled for the speech therapist to provide phonics instruction, the participant would sit and observe. While this was beneficial to an extent, the hands-on experience is what connects the head knowledge with the carrying out of instruction. This class was assigned to the participant for the semester and the routines remained in place, while observation served as the only means for the student teacher to gain understanding of phonics. After this semester was completed, the participant was placed into a fourth-grade classroom.

The timing of the placement is noteworthy, as it took place in the spring semester. Consequently, the kids were getting ready for the STAAR test (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). The majority of the preparation would be limited to small groups with them working on math or reading, depending on the needs of the students, as identified by the classroom teacher. While working in small groups, the student teacher

was going over strategies of how to look for text evidence, how to interpret reading passages, recognizing the author's purpose, and other strategies. (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). The abilities of the students ranged across the board and the participant would work with students who demonstrated the most need on some days and students who required little to no support in their completion of activities. Based on this experience, the student teacher again, was not receiving any opportunities to instruct in phonics. The focus remained on preparing for the test and eventually the state assessment came and was completed by the students. Shortly afterwards, the semester came to a close and the participant graduated and moved to Maryland to begin her teaching career.

During her first year of teaching, she worked in a suburban area teaching at a brand-new blended learning school, which entailed students using laptops and following online curriculum as well as conventional face-to-face teachers (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). This particular school is located in Hyattsville, Maryland and is labeled as a public charter school with an enrollment of 375 students. The demographic consists of approximately 56.6% African American students, 15.6% Caucasian, 14.2% Hispanic, 7.3% Other, and 6.3% Asian (Pearson Education, Inc. 2015). This school was created as a result of the College Park City-University Partnership (CPCUP) in order to improve its local community (Pearson Education, Inc. 2015). The initial goal consisted of wanting to attract middle-class families to the school and university, while retaining professors with families.

During its inception, the participant worked with sixth-grade students teaching science and did not pursue gaining a deeper understanding of phonics instruction, seeing

that it was not necessarily required in this setting. Following this year, she served in the special education department. This role called for her to draft and write individualized education plans (IEP), participate in IEP meetings, and service sixth through eighth grade students, along with other miscellaneous items. After a year in this role, she returned to sixth grade to teach language arts in the same blending learning environment. The majority of her instruction was focused on novel studies and following along with the given curriculum, which called for the students to dig deeper into the texts through analysis and utilizing different reading strategies.

The participant was asked to share her experience in response to questions concerning her preparedness to teach phonics. As far as preparedness goes, she expressed how she took a course in phonics during her sophomore year and completed her student teaching in her fourth year. Due to this gap in time, she found it wasn't helpful (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). Along with this, she explained the information received in her phonics course was focused on the science behind the words, rather than strategies of how to teach the concepts to the students. This poses an issue since there is a disconnection between the timing of the mentioned coursework and hands-on practice, along with the lack of modeling strategies. To further demonstrate this disconnection, the participant shared how her student teaching failed to render an opportunity to include phonics in literacy instruction. The placement and timing of her placement was critical in her development as a teacher. Since the coursework and fieldwork occurred at different times, the transfer of her knowledge in phonics was not put into practice.

If given a position to instruct a reader struggling with reading, the participant explained her process of first testing the student to see their level with assessments. She

would also utilize the STAR (Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading) created and provided by Accelerated Reader. After this, she would test her students frequently to see if their levels are going up (Grace, N. personal communication, July 10, 2017). This protocol was learned through the assistance of her coworkers after she began teaching. Since this was a school mandate, the participant sat with teachers who had been at that same campus and learned the intricacies of administering and gaining information from the assessments. No mention of explicit phonics instruction or guided reading work was made.

As far as the participants' recommendations for changes to be made, she mentioned how face-to-face conversations would have been helpful to gain insight as to what other teachers were doing in their own classroom. Through this process, discourse occurs concerning what worked and what didn't work in a particular situation or with a certain student. Eventually, these conversations create a collaborative environment, in which teachers are thriving because they have identified solutions together. This is beneficial for first-year teachers who are learning the ropes of their classroom. They are able to enter a classroom, observe a mini-lesson, ask questions, and receive answers. If there are replicable methods, the teacher can potentially execute the same strategies in their own classroom. Learning phonics instruction through this method will allow student teachers to sit and have a conversation with their mentor teacher as to why they did during a lesson. In the same manner, my sentiments are similar as to what would have been helpful to have in order to prepare for phonics instruction.

Results for Question Two

As far as my personal field based experience, the inclusion of phonics in literacy instruction almost ceased to exist. The focus was mainly given to whole-group instruction and ensuring the curriculum was being followed explicitly both in my intern semester and my student-teaching semester. During my intern semester in the kindergarten classroom, I was able to have exposure to a reading small group being held excluding the phonics segment. Other than this instance, my interactions and understanding of phonics instruction was limited. In my final semester as a student teacher, fluency was focused on through pairing students together who demonstrated similar reading skills. The students were given a reading passage at their instructional level, and were expected to time one another while the passage was being read aloud. Following the reading, they would track their growth on a bar graph by totaling the words per minute. The students would participate in this activity on a daily basis. As I reflect back on this specific strategy, I recognize the fact that this particular classroom was a third-grade classroom and may not have necessarily required explicit phonics instruction to be given and the focus was instead on developing their fluency and expression coupled with comprehension. Due to my limited days in the kindergarten classroom, per the university requirement for the intern of one semester, I was unable to receive an extensive amount of knowledge regarding phonics.

Looking back, it would have been helpful to have an immediate transfer of knowledge from the university setting to the classroom setting. Through this, I would have been able to identify strategies that worked and develop my own confidence in providing instruction to readers who are beginning their journey of reading, along with

those who may not have received proper reading instruction in the primary grades. Along with this, an increase in exposure to small group instruction, including phonics word work, would have been beneficial. This would have allowed for me to observe and ask questions while receiving justification for why the teacher instructed in a certain manner. To provide even more experience, the potential to lead a small group while being observed, would have been critical in the long run. This type of experience would provide more outlets for conversations to be had, opportunities for feedback to be given and received, along with thoughtfully planning specific action plans for students who were identified as a reader needing extra support. This knowledge became available to me during my fourth year of teaching as a second-grade teacher because of the added component of accountability.

As mentioned before, I was not held accountable for providing small group instruction for reading. Therefore, my focus was on whole-group teaching and ensuring I was following the scope and sequence of the curriculum during my first three years of teaching. The focus of my intern and student teaching semesters was resurfacing in my own classroom. It wasn't until my fourth year of teaching that I began digging into resources and professional development sessions that would help grow me in my knowledge of phonics instruction. These tools were desperately needed, seeing that three of my own students entered into my classroom reading below grade level. At the beginning, middle, and end of the year, we were required to administer the Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA). This test captured the ability of the student to decode words, their fluency, along with their comprehension. Following the assessment, these three students were immediately identified as students needing extra

support. Consequently, an action plan was required and I met with these students three to four days during the week. My main source of instruction came from Fountas and Pinnell's Phonics: Grade 2 book. This instructional handbook provided a sequenced methodology to provide phonics instruction, along with a variety of activities to ensure students were grasping the concept. Through this daily activity, the students were able to fill in their gaps of letter sounds and application to words when decoding. Each of these students grew in their reading level despite the fact that all of them had entered below the required level 16, per district guidelines. This particular situation served as a component for the ignition surrounding this study. Although I was not properly equipped to provide phonics instruction when exiting from my teacher preparation program, my circumstances forced me to identify outside help and practical ways to grant this to these students. This should not be the case for teachers who have exited a teacher preparation program.

Both the participant and participant-researcher felt a sense of inadequacy regarding phonics instruction. The factors ranged as to why the feelings of ill-preparedness existed. In order to benefit the next group of teachers exiting a teacher preparation program, the conversations and reflections from the proposed questions were analyzed and similar themes emerged which are shared below.

Research Limitations

Given that this research solely captured the narrative and experience of two individuals, this research is not generalizable. One other limiting factor includes the timing of this study. Both participants were four to five years removed from their pre-service teaching experience. This could possibly impact the results due to the amount of

time that has passed in between student teaching and the first-year of teaching. Moving forward, individuals who have recently graduated should be interviewed in order to capture an up-to-date reflection of their experience and sentiments regarding their preparedness to provide explicit phonics instruction.

Summary

Overall, there are a variety of themes that emerged from the two participants sharing their stories and experience during their undergraduate career and entering into their first year of teaching. Some of these factors resulted because of decisions made by the university, the timing of the placements, and the decisions made by the program coordinator. As mentioned before, these played a significant role in shaping the experiences of the individuals. In order to provide student teachers with the necessary tools to teach phonics, there must be a shift in the organization and order of the student teaching years, the mandated coursework, and time for application. A reevaluation of the current offerings of teacher preparation sites must be conducted in order to identify possible areas of strength and areas of growth. Through this constant and consistent reevaluation and reflection, teacher preparation sites are able to better prepare student teachers for their first year in providing explicit phonics instruction to their students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The aim of the study was to gather feedback regarding the level of preparedness of phonics instruction in the elementary classroom from the perspectives of two individuals. This includes a participant outside of the study and the researcher herself. Through the collection of narratives, the use of a bias journal, and personal reflection, the researcher was able to identify overarching themes and identify possible recommendations for the future of university teacher preparation programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions was addressed in this study:

1. What are the perceptions of the two teachers in regards to their preparation for teaching phonics?

Organization of Study

The purpose behind this study, along with the personal experience and realizations of the researcher is included in chapter one. Chapter two highlights past literature in connection to teachers and their level of preparedness to provide phonics instruction. Chapter three describes the methods used along with the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability related to this particular study. In chapter four, an overview of the research procedures, data analysis, and overarching themes are provided. The significance and recommendations for future studies and conclusions are presented in the following chapter.

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative narrative self-study approach which included a variety of data sources. The narratives were collected through the participant and the participant-researcher responding to an semi-structured interview. Through this method, both individuals were able to respond to the posed questions, along with any other additional comments that may have surfaced. The stories of both participants were captured since there was freedom in providing additional information that may not have been captured by the original questions in the survey. This led into the self-study component of the study. The researcher was also a participant and allowed this study to be a piece of self-reflection of her experience during her teacher preparation program and its effect during the early years of teaching in the elementary school setting.

Data Collection

The study took place face-to-face with the participant and the researcher. The participant was invited via phone and accepted the role of participating in this study. The data collection process occurred over the course of a week during the summer of 2017. Before the interview took place, the participant was made aware of the interview structure and was asked for consent to proceed. The participant obliged and the interview process began. During the interview, the participant-researcher proceeded to respond to the questions for the survey and provided feedback. Then, the researcher provided recordings to a transcription service and within 48 hours, the entire interview had been transcribed and sent back. After the transcription had been received, the information had been read and analyzed by the researcher to identify common themes. After this, the participant was given access to the transcription and was given freedom to provide

additional information or exclude any information that she did not want to be shared.

Following the collection of data, the researcher began to process the gathered information through chunking similar ideas, created descriptors for the commonalities, reviewed the data, and began to create overarching themes found in the interview along with the bias journal. These pieces of information were then analyzed to identify possible next steps.

Data Analysis

Through the use of the semi-structured interview, the bias journal, and the narratives that emerged, the researcher chunked these bits of information into several overarching themes for possible recommendations for teacher preparation programs. These include the commonalities regarding the timing gap, necessity for hands-on experience, field placement and designated responsibilities, effective professional development, the utilization of technology to provide phonics instruction, mentorship, the role of administrators, and the need for high-quality phonics instruction for elementary age students.

Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability

Credibility “involves establishing that the results of qualitative research are credible or believable from the perspective of the participant in the research” (Trochim, W. 2016, para 3). In particular, this study ensured the adoption of research methods were well-established. The participant and researcher were asked to participate due to a specific criterion that needed to be met. Both individuals had taught for five years or less in an elementary school setting, while having completed a teacher preparation program from a university in Texas. Also, a triangulation of the data was utilized through the use of analyzing the transcript, the collection of information in the bias journal, along with

the self-study component. Transferability refers to the opportunity that exists to replicate the study, if needed. This was addressed through the thorough explanation of the setting, the participants, and the procedures that took place before, during, and after the interview. The dependability of this research study is present due to the research design and implementation being parallel with one another. The researcher utilized a bias journal in order to reduce the effect of investigator bias along with ensuring that the work's findings are the result of the responses from the participant and the participant-researcher. Through these measures that were taken, confirmability was able to be tended to in this study.

Timing Gap

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the participant completed her phonics course in her sophomore year and not during student teaching. Due to this, there was a gap in time that allowed for gained knowledge to be forgotten, along with a lack of application from knowledge to a hands-on experience. The participant-researcher experienced a similar event, seeing that the phonics instruction given by the university occurred during the second semester, while the student teaching experience occurred the following spring. Because of this time gap, there is a possibility of losing knowledge without a way to apply it. In order to eradicate this occurrence, program coordinators must be strategic in the placement of student teachers to be sure that student teachers are in a classroom where explicit phonics instruction will occur, with opportunities for the student teacher to take the lead and receive feedback.

Hands-On Experiences

Another common occurrence through both testimonies includes the limited hands-on experience made available by the school sites. Because of this, along with other components, the participants felt a sense of inadequacy relating to phonics instruction. However, if mentor teachers were able to bring the student teacher alongside them, similar to a co-teach model, this provides more exposure for the student teacher. Marilyn Friend and Lynne Cook identify “co-teaching as a specific service delivery option that is based on collaboration” in their book, Interactions: Collaboration Skills for School Professionals. This methodology is very common in schools today as captured in the quote of “Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn,” coined by an unknown author. In the same way that involvement with our students results in higher engagement and learning, the same principle should therefore be applied to the student teacher and mentor teacher relationship. This involvement and dialogue creates an avenue for the student teacher to reflect and ask necessary questions, along with providing a space for the mentor teacher to reevaluate their teaching methods as well. This sort of setup provides a mutual benefit for involved parties.

Placement and Responsibility

As mentioned in chapter four, the placement of the student teacher in the classroom is a critical piece in their development as a teacher. There are factors to be considered such as the qualifications of the mentor teacher, the timing of the placement, the grade that is taught, and the willingness of the mentor teacher to act as a supervisor, along with other miscellaneous items that may surface. The spring semester for upper grades would not render itself to opportunities for student teachers to witness small group

instruction with explicit phonics instruction, due to the testing season that occurs each spring. Also, the lower primary grades should be considered to be part of placement options for a longer duration. The longer the student teacher stays in the classroom, the more opportunity exists for more responsibilities to take on. Instead of sitting back and observing, the longer hours and days grant chances to potentially pull small groups and create plans to help readers who could be struggling. If placed properly, student teachers could benefit greatly from the gained knowledge through adding knowledge and tools to their understanding of teaching.

Professional Development

Professional development is good. Effective professional development is even better. With the variety of learning styles, it is important to meet teachers in a place where they are able to benefit at the maximum level. My need for phonics professional development was there before I recognized it. However, my participation in one professional development covering phonics changed my entire lens regarding this kind of instruction. I was able to relearn the science behind phonics, along with creating a lesson plan to help a reader who was identified as struggling. Within three hours, a few of my gaps in phonics instruction disappeared. I was able to grab on because I was involved and reflecting on my own classroom and students. Each year, new teachers are entering the classrooms and many of them may have received coursework in phonics. However, “Pre-field teachers from the U.S.A. scored the highest in sub-components of phonological awareness but lowest in morphological awareness and phonics (Washburn, Joshi, & Cantrell, 2011). Therefore, systems must be in place from the district level, to help in equipping first-year teachers and others who may not have received adequate training at

their university or through an alternative certification program. These safeguards will create a space that will allow teachers to ask questions, gain knowledge, and immediately transfer these skills to their classroom.

Technology Integration

With the advance in technology over the years, one company has identified a way to bring explicit phonics instruction into the university setting, along with classrooms through an application. CAPIT Reading serves as a “dynamic instructional tool that advances learners in phonics as they demonstrate mastery and automaticity of foundational skills” (CAPIT Learning Inc., 2016). This program is intended to be used alongside any language arts curriculum for any classroom between pre-kindergarten through the second-grade years. One of the strengths that is unique to this program includes the emphasis of the teacher continuing to teach in an organic manner, while utilizing this technology to assist as a supplemental material, instead of creating a gap where the teacher is replaced. This program suggests for students to “spend between 20-30 minutes a day, 4-5 days a week playing and learning with CAPIT reading” (Capital Learning Inc., 2016). An additional feature of this program allows for the university professor to gain access to a free trial in order to use this application as part of the coursework. Pre-service teachers are able to gain access to this piece of technology and identify ways to integrate this into their lesson plans. From this, the participating students are able to receive a free trial in their own classroom after they graduate. Overall, this application provides a wholesome way for preservice teachers to gain exposure to a tool that could potentially be used in their future classroom.

Mentorship

As captured in the participant's narrative, the first year contains a variety of situations that requires the attention of the teacher and may take precedent over other classroom responsibilities at times. These situations include, but are not limited to, classroom organization, completing paperwork, developing parent-teacher and student-teacher relationships, certain educational terms being used, along with an array of other items. The participant shared her own experience of being unaware of terms being used in the educational setting that caused her to reach a point of "up until you are actually experiencing it, you obviously don't understand" (Grace, N. personal conversation, July 10, 2017). The purpose of this information and personal anecdote serve as the reasoning for why mentorships can serve as a critical part in the first year of a teacher's career. In my fourth year of teaching, a veteran teacher of 36 years teaching next door, took it upon herself to stand in as my mentor. She shared phonics strategies she had been using for years, organization tips, advice on solving a classroom situation, amongst other critical pieces that I needed to be aware of. Although I was in my fourth year of teaching, I benefitted greatly from this mentorship relationship. I was able to reflect and think about the strategies I would replicate in my classroom, along with alternate options that would work better for my students. As I created other options and the students demonstrated success, I was able to share this with my mentor. These simple moments for discourse led to a stronger and confident year of teaching because I was aware of expectations and had freedom to consult my next-door teacher just in case. This unexpected mentorship proved to be beneficial for both parties involved, which sheds light on the importance of veteran

teachers using their experience to shepherd first-year teachers in general and/or incoming teachers to that particular campus.

The Role of Administrators

In a study conducted by Paul V. Bredeson and Olof Johansson, the school's principal role in teacher professional development is glaringly clear. 'Professional development refers to learning opportunities that engage teachers' creative and reflective capacities to strengthen their practice.' (Bredeson, 1999, p. 4) For this context, the need for professional development in phonics will equip teachers to provide the highest quality instruction for students, which will consequently set a foundation for the other pillars of reading such as phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension to begin taking shape. The study clearly explains how school principals have multiple tasks to complete and roles to maintain, however, one of the primary tasks "is to create and maintain positive, and healthy teaching and learning environments for everyone in the school, including the professional staff" (Bredeson, Johansson, 2006, pg. 386). If and when a first-year teacher steps into the school building without proper knowledge of carrying out phonics instruction, it is the role of the administrator to step in to ensure the individual is given the needed tools to be successful, primarily seen through professional development. Also, through the narrative of the participant, she mentioned the need and importance of feedback while phonics instruction is occurring. "Accountability is number one. Holding or having meetings with them is important because the administrator can share what they saw in a phonics lesson and/or what they didn't see. It's always nice to have an extra pair of eyes seeing" (Cherian, N. personal conversation, July 10, 2017). This recommendation is in alignment with the importance of "follow-through in the form

of modeling, feedback, coaching, and support” and how they serve as “critical resources for implementing changes in teachers’ classroom practices successfully” (Bredeson & Johansson, 2006, pg. 393). Also, “providing support for teacher learning and growth is also a vital role for school principals” (Bredeson & Johansson, 2006, pg. 394). Data collected by Bredeson and Johansson suggest this support comes in a variety of forms such as “financial support, a learning environment in which teachers can take risks, and professional knowledge” (Bredeson & Johansson, 2005, pg. 395-396). Principals have substantial potential for impacting teacher professional development. As applied to this particular context, principals are in a role that could promote proper understanding of phonics instruction by providing opportunities for effective phonics instruction professional development, along with granting feedback through observations and walkthroughs. Thinking of other positions within the school building that affect phonics instruction is directly tied to the role of reading specialists.

The Role of Reading Specialists

In response to a growing concern regarding student achievement in reading, the International Literacy Association created a position statement that “(a) explains why teaching all children to read depends on reading specialists, (b) identifies reading specialists, (c) defines the roles of reading specialists, and (d) comments on the preparation of reading specialists” (International Literacy Association, January 2000, pg. 2). The reading specialist is a professional with a variety of experiences and preparation in reading and has “responsibility for the literacy performance of readings in general and of struggling readers in particular” (International Literacy Association, January 2000, pg. 2). Instruction, assessment, and leadership are three key components that were focused

on during this statement provided by the association. However, for this specific context of phonics instruction in this specific study, the focus is placed on the leadership role of the reading specialist, as outlined by the International Literacy Association. As mentioned by the participant and participant-researcher in the semi-structured interview, this support was critical and much needed as the first-year of teaching began. When both individuals stepped into the classroom, they had felt inadequately prepared to deliver phonics instruction. As supported by the literature mentioned in chapter two, many first-year teachers leave their teacher preparation program feeling ill-prepared to provide high-quality phonics instruction. “They play an essential role in supporting individual teachers—especially new teachers—and administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading” (International Literacy Association, January 2000, pg. 3) This ties into the leadership role of the reading specialist for the new teacher along with serving a role in providing pertinent information to the school administrators. Through leading professional development workshops, modeling strategies and techniques, conducting lessons and/or engaging in collaborative lessons, the role of the reading specialist as a leader is multidimensional. The first-year teacher will benefit from this type of support in this area, especially if they are unaware of the proper techniques when it comes to reading instruction in phonics. The reading specialist serves as part of the “core of the educational team” (International Literacy Association, January 2000, pg. 5). Therefore, it is important for the school administrator to ensure that this individual/s are capable of providing the aforementioned support for first-year teachers and/or new teachers to the building who are unaware of how to carry out phonics instruction at the elementary setting.

Is It Necessary?

It is justifiable to argue that explicit phonics instruction may not necessarily be required for all teachers, given the range of teaching positions from K-12. At the same time, there are older readers who struggle with the basic language structure because of previous experiences of not being able to gain the necessary skills as a reader. If all teachers were confident in providing phonics instruction, there could potentially be a limited amount of readers struggling with the foundational parts of the English language. Standards tell us that kindergarten through fifth grade students must know and apply grade level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. Research tells us that 84% of the words follow a predictable pattern (Hanna, Hanna, Hodges & Rudorf, 1966). Through the years, the number has decreased to approximately 50% (Moats, L, & Tolman, C 2009). However, the implication of these numbers remains the same. This is a teachable element to our children. If the basic pieces are taught and practiced by the students, they are able to apply this knowledge to texts in reading and other subjects.

Looking Ahead

From this interview, the participant commented on her perception of her teacher preparation program specifically towards phonics. However, she took it a step further when she was asked to add any other information to the interview. She commented on being unaware of how to organize her classroom all the way to not being certain about setting up an empty classroom that will prove to be conducive to student learning. Although this is not tied to the topic of phonics, it still bears strength in shedding light to the needs of a teacher who has left a teacher preparation program. The university, specifically the professors and coordinators within the teacher preparation program, must

identify their areas of highest need and create systems and structures to ensure teachers are stepping away with an overall confidence to be a leader in their own classroom. This includes, but is not limited to, equipping teachers with time to prepare their classrooms and adjust into their new setting, engaging in discourse about school-wide expectations and strategies to best provide instruction to students, etc. “Although competence in teaching, as in all professions, is shaped significantly by on-the-job experiences and continuous learning, the programs that prepare teachers to work in K-12 classrooms can be early and important contributors to the quality of instruction” (Feuer, Floden, Chudowsky, Ahn, 2013, p.12). While this is true, the teacher cannot simply hope to receive all their necessary knowledge by experiencing on-the-job interactions. Therefore, the teacher preparation sites must do everything in their realm of power to send their pre-service teachers into a school environment being as prepared as possible.

Leadership

Sending first-year teachers into the elementary classroom to provide high-quality phonics instruction is critical. The goal of reading is to make meaning of the printed words. Before students step into that portion of reading, they must first be knowledgeable about the meaning of certain symbols which are equivalent to letters in the English language. With only about 50% of English words labeled as being fully decodable, an additional 37% of words being mostly decodable with the exception of one sound, and 13% of the English words needing to be memorized, the expectation of students simply picking these up on their own quickly diminishes (Reed, D. 2016). Teachers have to enter into the classroom, fully-equipped and confident, to carry out phonics instruction.

Future Studies

If this study were to be replicated, it may yield strength in gathering data from more than two individuals. Since only two participants provided responses, this study is not able to be generalized. Through the use of multiple responses being present, there are many other dimensions that could potentially be tapped into, along with the possible identification of more overarching themes that could lead to implications for teacher preparation programs. Along with this, the two individuals had been teaching for at least four to five years before being asked to explain their perception. Therefore, this gap in timing restricts the study in that the responses are based off teachers who are four to five years removed from their teacher preparation program. To provide more information about the teacher preparation program in the future, it will be beneficial to interview professors who provide instruction in phonics. This will bring in another dimension for this study and allow a different perspective to be shared and analyzed.

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Appendix A

Consent Form

Consent for Participation in Interview Research

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Sharon Abraham from the University of Houston . I understand that the project is designed to gather information about teacher preparedness. I will be one of two individuals being interviewed for this study.

1. My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
2. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by Sharon Abraham from the University of Houston. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made.
4. I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. Subsequent uses of records and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions.
5. Faculty and administrators from my campus will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts. This precaution will prevent my individual comments from having any negative repercussions.
6. I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
7. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

My Signature

Date

Printed Name

Signature of the Investigator

**Adapted from Stanford University*

Appendix B

IRB Exemption

IRB Exemption

From: Griffin, Danielle

Sent: Monday, March 06, 2017 11:53 AM

To: Hutchison, Laveria F

Cc: Sharon Abraham (sharon.abraham90@gmail.com)

Subject: RE: Dissertation Question

Hello,

It sounds like this work does not qualify as Human research under our regulatory definition. Research on one's self and research on one individual is not generalizable. If the possible results cannot be generalized, then it does not require our review.

Danielle Griffin, MS, CIP

Compliance Specialist

713-743-4057

Dgriffi5@central.uh.edu