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# Creating and Implementing Professional Development with Self-Selected Literacy Content for Teachers in a Developing Country

Tiffany Arnett Regan

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO  
Greeley, Colorado  
The Graduate School

CREATING AND IMPLEMENTING PROFESSIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT WITH SELF-SELECTED  
LITERACY CONTENT FOR TEACHERS  
IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education

Tiffany Arnett Regan

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences  
School of Teacher Education  
Educational Studies Program  
August 2017

This Dissertation by: Tiffany Arnett Regan

Entitled: *Creating and Implementing Professional Development with Self-selected Literacy Content for Teachers in a Developing Country*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor Education in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences, School of Teacher Education

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

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## ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this descriptive case study was to identify teacher strengths and needs to create a site-specific professional development program for literacy. I was interested in studying how to identify teacher needs and strengths and explore the compatibility between teacher beliefs, current practice, and best practices in literacy.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- Q1 In a developing country, what process is the best fit for creating and implementing a professional development program based on an asset-driven model and self-selected literacy content?
- Q2 How is a balance attained among current practice, self-selected content, and known best practices in literacy instruction?

This study was conducted over a two-month period in two schools, but the entire data collection period spanned nine months. Data from teacher surveys were collected from teachers at two different public-schools. Participants were six 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers from two different elementary schools in the same district. Data sources included observational field notes, research journal notes, teacher surveys, digital correspondence, photographs, and interviews.

Results for question one indicated that four themes emerged from the data: (a) addressing the three ecologies of knowing is crucial, (b) the revised process flowchart is an effective tool, (c) flexibility is necessary for this context, and (d) effective

communication is vital and challenging. Results for the second question indicated that the process for achieving a balance among current practices and beliefs, identifying self-selected content, and incorporating both with known best practices was effective. Moreover, attempts to implement new strategies may be affected more by a lack of material resources than by teacher beliefs or current practices.

The results of this study point to implications for professional development. I created an adapted version of a professional development model that incorporates components that address critical theory and social constructivist perspectives. Also, the process flowchart may be useful as a template for educators in creating and implementing a professional development program that is based on an asset-driven model.

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Preparing all the materials for the seminar was a daunting task. I am forever grateful for the expertise of Lorna Soto, a nationally board-certified Spanish teacher and native Spanish speaker, who translated documents for the study.

There are many friends and colleagues in Honduras to thank for their generous gift of time and patience. I am grateful for being allowed into the schools and classrooms of educators who worked tirelessly, even though they did not know when their next paycheck was coming. I was humbled and honored to work with such dedicated educators. I look forward to continuing our journey of learning together. I value the connections and close friendships that I made.

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This doctoral journey would not have been possible without the generous gift of an undergraduate education from my parents, Wayne and Sandy Arnett. I have always been grateful for the opportunity to continue academic pursuits, which all started with my degree from Texas A&M University. Their continual love and support is one of my greatest blessings.



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*I didn't know it would keep getting better and better.*

Ken Regan

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

*“Caminante, no hay camino. Se hace camino al andar.”*

Machado (2004, p. 280)

*“Traveler, your footprints  
are the only road, nothing else.  
Traveler, there is no road;  
You make your own path as you walk.”*

Machado (2003, p. 55)

On a recent trip to a developing country, I visited a school in a poverty-stricken area to assess striving students and develop a plan for literacy interventions. Working in the school, I realized that most of the instructional day was spent copying notes from a blackboard, and the striving students were years behind their peers; one 12-year-old girl could not recognize a single letter. No remediation plan was in place for any of the striving students because the teachers did not have access to specialists, training, or material resources.

Textbooks or trade books were not evident in any classroom, and the library, located in the corner of a fifth-floor classroom, consisted of several wooden bookshelves stuffed with books in disarray and covered with a thick layer of dust. Providing time and books for children to read was not a routine practice at this school. Emphasis was placed on rote memorization and respectful, compliant behavior. Every classroom was filled

with students sitting silently in ordered rows, including the “baby class” of 3- and 4-year-old students. Despite the sweltering heat and overwhelming odor of hot, stagnant air and raw sewage, even the youngest children sat quietly or fell asleep.

This encounter in Africa was one of several experiences I had in various developing countries while volunteering with a Christian nonprofit organization. A book written by the founder of the organization, *Ana's Voice: When God Speaks Through a Silent Child* (Jessen, 2005) had a profound impact on me, both personally and spiritually, and prompted my first trip to Romania. It was on that first trip to a group home, Ana's House, that I realized how a modest effort can have a tremendous impact on children who have been abandoned, orphaned, or who live in tenuous circumstances. I was able to witness the remarkable faith of the house parents and children who lived in the group home. I traveled to India, Kenya, and made several more trips to Romania to continue to support the work of the organization. Witnessing the incredible strength and unwavering faith of the children we served revitalized my faith and fortified my commitment to continue the work.

It was during visits to these countries that I could observe different models of teaching and realize that many teachers did not have access to professional growth opportunities. My experiences in Africa prompted me to consider the compatibility of instructional beliefs of the teachers and their current practices with the recommendations that would be a part of my literacy intervention plan. My intervention plan was based on the best practices that I learned as a classroom teacher through attending seminars at literacy conferences, professional development from the school district, and graduate work in literacy intervention based on the literacy processing theory from Clay (1985).



The term *best practice* refers to “an instructional practice with a record of success that is both trustworthy and valid” (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011, p. 17). This experience in Africa prompted the genesis of my research project and eventually led to the creation of the second research question, which addresses attaining a balance among current teacher practices, content, and best practices.

Two pillars of the literacy processing theory are that children need opportunities to read and write, and children need the chance to read continuous text (Clay, 1985). The information from the many literacy seminars that I attended, professional books that I read, and my academic work on my master’s degree in literacy also supported the practice of providing children with the opportunity to read a wide variety of continuous text (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1977; Allington & Johnston, 2002; Clay, 2001; Dorn, French, & Jones, 1998; Fountas & Pinnell, 2001; Harvey & Goudvis, 2000; Keene & Zimmermann, 2007; Miller, 2002, 2009; Morrow & Gambrell, 2011; Routman, 2000; Trelease, 2006). My intervention plan included the practice of children reading a variety of texts. Although texts were available in the small school library, none of the teachers had any texts in their classrooms. In this school, children did not read books in the classroom. How could I help the teachers support their students in becoming proficient readers when their beliefs and/or current practices might be incongruent with the literacy recommendations that I was to make?

Concerns regarding compatibility between beliefs and instructional recommendations are valid, given that teacher beliefs are an integral part of classroom practice (Maxson, 1996). Moreover, teacher beliefs about literacy instructional practices influence teaching (Johnston, Afflerbach, & Weiss, 1993; Powers, Zippay, & Butler,

2006; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991). Therefore, identifying teacher beliefs about specific subjects or domains, such as literacy, before creating professional development experiences or instructional recommendations is a reasonable step to consider in creating opportunities for meaningful and sustainable teacher growth. However, consideration of teacher beliefs alone is not enough to support the development of a meaningful and sustainable experience. To support meaningful experiences, the local context and specific needs of teachers should be considered (Korthagen, 2007). Several components can support sustainability such as ongoing support through coaching (Englert & Tarrant, 1995), a structure which supports reflective practices (Shulman, 2004), establishing a community of practice to maintain motivation and develop long-term memory within an organization (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992; Smith, 2009), and leadership support within the school (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Bryk, Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010).

#### Overview of the Problem

Teacher quality plays a vital role in student achievement (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Grant, Young, & Montbriand, 2001; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). In developing countries, teachers are more likely to be underprepared (Villegas-Reimers, 2003). For example, Villegas-Reimers (1998) conducted a review of the literature for pre-service teacher education in Latin America and found several issues of concern, including poor quality of curriculum, emphasis on theory rather than practice, and programs that are too short. While visiting Kenya and India, I noticed a rigid teacher-dominated model of instruction. Rote-learning and lecture-driven pedagogies are practiced in many developing countries (United Nations Educational, Scientific and

Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2015). This traditional method of teaching persists in many classrooms across the globe. My goal is not to eradicate the traditional model of teaching, but rather to provide opportunities for teachers to learn methods that support the growth of individual learners and integrate those methods that best work for their teaching situation. For this reason, my research questions focused on self-selected content and achieving a balance among best practices, teacher beliefs, current teacher practices, and content. The methods that evolve from this research project must work for their teaching situation.

Approximately 80% of the world's population of children live in developing countries, and disadvantaged children suffer the most from poorly trained teachers (Glewwe & Kremer, 2006; UNESCO, 2015). For this study, the term "developing countries" was chosen over descriptors such as majority world or global south in order to remain consistent with the terminology used in materials referenced from sources such as UNESCO and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Receiving a quality education is important for all students, but it is imperative for students living in extreme poverty. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), improvement in educational attainment is needed to break the persistent high poverty rate (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Education can provide the skills necessary to break the cycle of poverty which can result in improved health, higher wages, and the opportunity to participate in civil society by exercising their rights (Center for Global Development, 2002). Yet another indication of the importance of education for students living in extreme poverty is the adoption of the *17 Sustainable Development Goals* by the UN General Assembly (2015), which includes the following:

We commit to providing inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels. . . All people, irrespective of sex, age, race or ethnicity, and persons with disabilities, migrants, indigenous peoples, children and youth, especially those in vulnerable situations, should have access to life-long learning opportunities that help them to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to exploit opportunities and to participate fully in society. We will strive to provide children and youth with a ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. (p. 7)

In Honduras, which was the location for this study, approximately 65% of the population lives in poverty, and 2002 estimates put the number of children ages 5-14 involved in child labor at 16% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). The literacy rate has improved from 56% in 1986, but only reached an estimated 88% in 2015 (Benjamin, 1989; Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Historical rise in literacy rates are mainly due to the expansion of educational opportunities (UNESCO, 2006). Central and South American countries began to pass compulsory attendance laws in the early 1900s, but “the single most significant factor influencing the spread of literacy worldwide over the past two centuries has been the expansion of formal schooling” (UNESCO, 2006, p. 194). Organized literacy campaigns also contributed to this trend. The importance of access to formal schooling is expressed by Honduran activist Elvia Alvarado, “We Hondurans are capable of anything, if we had the education” (Benjamin, 1989, p. 104).

Teacher quality is an important factor for student achievement (Blair, Rupley, & Nichols, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Grant, Young, & Montbriand, 2001; Villegas-Reimers, 2003). Supporting teacher quality depends on well-trained teachers who have the opportunity for meaningful and sustainable professional development experiences. Teachers value ongoing professional development and value it even more when the training is intense and of longer duration (Bean & Dagen, 2012). Professional development needs to be meaningful for the specific needs of teachers and must consider

the local context. One reason for failure of most education change is that no input is sought from teachers before goals are set (Korthagen, 2007). The Assets and Needs Assessment Survey can identify strengths and needs and provide the opportunity for teachers to select the content of the professional development.

Instructional decisions are impacted by a teacher's theoretical orientation; therefore, a meaningful and sustainable professional development experience should include identifying teacher beliefs and providing the opportunity for teachers to develop these beliefs and philosophies (Harste & Burke, 1977; Noddings, 1997; Tillema, 1994). The need for teachers to address their theoretical orientation led me to collect information on their beliefs and current practices through a survey and an interview administered on site at the beginning of the seminar and at the end of the program. This data collection may provide insight into understanding teacher beliefs, their current practices, and the process of reconciling beliefs and practices which may be incompatible.

### Problem Statement

Teachers in developing countries need more opportunities for effective and sustainable professional development that supports student learning. In order to provide these opportunities, teachers need a process which allows them to identify needs and build on existing strengths.

### Teacher Beliefs, Current Practice, and Self-selected Content

Teacher beliefs play an important role in acquiring new learning and "somehow training has to deal with pre-existing cognitions" (Tillema, 1994, p. 602). My experience with supporting teacher learning in a developing country underscored the importance of teacher beliefs, current practice, and how they may impact teacher learning. I created a

literacy intervention plan for students in Nairobi, which was likely never implemented. My plan called for individual support and independent reading of levelled text in a school that taught only whole group and did not provide time or books for students to read. Their current practice and possibly their beliefs about how children learn were incompatible with my recommendations. Moreover, attending to teacher beliefs and current practices in the context of teacher learning is relevant for programs in developing countries because identifying beliefs and practices as an initial step of professional development may guard against the arbitrary imposition of values or models on the learning process of the teacher participants. Authors Corbett and Fikkert (2014) explained that the “outside-in” model of poverty alleviation is ineffective and often undermines the community that it was intended to help. They gave the example of huge amounts of aid money given to Africa with little large-scale improvement. Over the past 50 years, more than 1 trillion dollars of compassionate aid has poured into Africa (Lupton, 2011). Nobel laureate Angus Deaton (2013) claimed that aid money from developed countries can negatively affect economic growth in the recipient countries, and the idea that developed countries must jump in and “save” developing countries is condescending and colonialist rhetoric.

Programs implemented with money from materially rich countries often do not align with local community values and needs and often hurt the community (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014; Easterly, 2006; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lupton, 2011). By contrast, programs developed on an “inside-out” model where the community identifies needs and strengths are much more effective (Corbett & Fikkert, 2014; De Negri, Llinigumugabo, Muvandi, & Lewis, 1998; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lupton, 2011). I believe this concept can parallel teacher learning in developing countries. Identifying

teacher beliefs and current practices and providing the opportunity for teachers to self-select content can support the creation of a professional development program from the inside-out. Corbett and Fikkert (2014) explained that “development is not done *to* people or *for* people but *with* people” (p. 100).

Developing *with* people requires establishing relationships. The authors of the Community Learning Exchange (CLE) theory of change endeavor to “situate the importance of relationships at the center of our thinking on change” (Guajardo, Guajardo, Janson, & Militello, 2016, p. 60). As with the “inside-out” model of development, CLE theory supports assets-based development that moves away from a deficit-based approach (Guajardo et al., 2016).

Self-selection of content can have positive effects on instructional practice and teacher learning (Brunkowski, 2004; Englert & Tarrant, 1995). However, the research is not what prompted me to include the self-selection component. The social justice implications of this component, which are discussed further in the theory section, are another impetus for self-selection. Self-selection provides an opportunity for teachers to decide what is important, to choose what will best meet their needs. The concept of choice is particularly important, given the history of Honduras. Historically, foreign entities have dictated policy that was of economic or political benefit to the foreign entity and a few elite Hondurans, but oppressive to the citizens and especially the *campesinos*, or rural poor (Benjamin, 1989). Land use, wages, and working conditions were often set by U.S. commercial interests or the U.S. military (Benjamin, 1989). Considering this history, it was important to establish teacher choice as a core component of the

professional development to begin the process of building a positive and trusting relationship.

Professional development programs developed in this way will better align with local values since the process begins with the community identifying their needs and strengths. One axiom of the CLE theory states that “the people closest to the issues are the best situated to discover answers to local concerns” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 50). By choosing literacy content relevant to their needs, the teachers will be best situated to discover strategies that will address local concerns regarding literacy learning. Providing a structure for self-selection of professional development content will increase the opportunity for alignment with local values. The teachers would have the opportunity to select professional development from a list of literacy topics. Any topic chosen from this list can be aligned with best practices. In this study, an opportunity was provided for the teachers to answer open-ended questions regarding topics for professional development content. These topics were evaluated for compatibility or incompatibility with best practices and I made a diligent effort to integrate the topics into the professional development content. Little research exists on the self-selection of professional development content, but more is needed to understand if this is an important component of creating a professional development program that acknowledges the specific context of the community.

Additionally, research is needed on how to use information about teacher beliefs and current practices to develop professional development that is meaningful to the teachers, rather than presenting content that is arbitrarily decided by an outside source. It needs to be meaningful in the sense that it addresses an area which the teachers have



identified as important. In addition to being meaningful professional development, it needs to be sustainable. The learning needs to be maintained to continue to grow the new knowledge and change practice. Self-selection of professional development content will support sustainability and will be more meaningful to participating teachers than content imposed on them from an outside source.

Collecting data on the relationship between teacher beliefs and professional development content and how to implement professional development based on self-selected content is needed to contribute to the overall knowledge base of how to best support teacher learning in a developing country. Without the consideration of beliefs or what the teachers consider to be important knowledge for teaching literacy, a professional development program will not likely be meaningful or sustainable. For the research site in Honduras, teacher beliefs, current practices, and teacher needs played an important role in the professional development program. The content was created around what the teachers believed to be important and what I brought to the seminar in terms of best practices in literacy. The process that ensued involved reconciling beliefs, current practices, self-selected content, and best practices with a goal of creating professional development experiences that were meaningful for the teacher participants.

When content is built around what teachers believe to be important, then teachers have a voice in their professional growth. In a study conducted in Chicago public-schools, teachers were given the opportunity to self-select their professional development (Brunkowski, 2004). Results indicated that self-selection has a positive impact on instructional practice and participant learning, but the professional development must include reflective and research-based components (Brunkowski, 2004).

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study was to understand the process of creating and implementing a professional development program from self-selected literacy content, to better understand the compatibility between professional development and teacher beliefs and current practices, and to observe how teachers identify and express their beliefs throughout this process. A social constructivist-perspective complements these purposes, given that the goal of this perspective is to rely heavily on the participant's interpretations of the situation (Creswell, 2013). Learning is constructed socially' therefore, the professional development program will incorporate a structure that supports social interaction, collaboration, and communities of practice (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1998; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 2000). Through these social constructivist perspectives, I considered the social context of teachers learning in a professional development setting and continuing the social interaction to sustain and grow the learning.

I provided a structure to create communities of practice while I was present at the research location. Moreover, critical theory provided a lens through which to create a program built on existing assets at the community, school, and teacher level that attempts to decolonize knowledge and provide an opportunity to mutually construct meaning in a specific context (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Wenger, 2000). The teachers chose the content of the professional development and constructed meaning in the context of how the content applied specifically to their school community and students. Critical theory submits the "taken-for-granted character of the social world (its concepts, understandings, cultural categories, etc.) to critical reconsideration" (Schwandt, 2007, p.

55). Critical researchers recognize “that some individuals and groups . . . are, if not silenced and disenfranchised by our educational practices, [are] nudged, shoved, and cast to the margins” (Cherryholmes, 1999, p. 35). The method for designing the professional development program was critically reconsidered by creating the content based on input from the participating teachers and identifying existing assets. The balance of power shifted in favor of the teacher participants as they decided which knowledge was important. Their ideas and input were not “cast to the margins.” In direct opposition to the deficit model, identifying existing assets was another critical reconsideration. Additionally, attention was directed to the professional development model and how the structures, which were developed in a Western cultural context, might need to be adapted to the current context, depending on input from the participants. The research would help to identify the ways to adapt professional development in the context of a developing country, which cannot be determined by merely guessing how to adapt the program or what teachers need. Data collection was needed to include the voices of the teachers in this discussion.

Greene described her notion of teaching as “notions of . . . intersubjectivity, the pursuit of various kinds of meaning, and the sense of untapped possibility--of what might be, what ought to be, what is not yet” (2001, p. 82). I hope to explore the untapped possibility of what might be, what ought to be and what is not yet.

### Research Questions

The following research questions directed my inquiry:

- Q1 In a developing country, what process is the best fit for creating and implementing a professional development program based on an asset-driven model and self-selected literacy content?

Q2 How is a balance attained among current practice, self-selected content, and known best practices in literacy instruction?

### Significance of the Study

In this descriptive case study, I collected and analyzed data on the area of self-selected content for professional development as well as how teachers identify and express their beliefs throughout the process. I intend to contribute to the body of research on creating meaningful and sustainable professional development content in a low-income region.

Teacher-centered pedagogies are utilized in many developing countries (UNESCO, 2011). These traditional “chalk-and-talk” models can be incompatible with learner-centered methods, and organizations such as UNESCO are supporting programs that move away from traditional teaching models (UNESCO, 2011). Teacher beliefs play an essential role in how teachers learn. Understanding teacher belief structures is necessary to improve teacher practice (Fenstermacher, 1978; Goodman, 1988; Munby, 1982, 1984; Nespore, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Luft and Roehrig stated that “Understanding the beliefs of teachers is critical if those of us . . . [in] teacher education are going to develop programs that have a lasting impact on our teachers.” (2007, p. 49). For teachers in low-income regions, the opportunity may not be available to develop, reflect on, and express specific beliefs. Through their participation in the research project, the teachers had the opportunity to become aware of specific beliefs and reflect on them. Semi-structured interviews during this process allowed for a flexible method of gathering information.

Shulman (2004) explained that documenting individual and collective teacher visions, motivations, and practice before mentoring interventions and how they respond after can provide a “conceptual and analytic tracking of the effects of mentoring” (p.

395). The reality is that few staff development trainers assess and consider teacher beliefs and relate them to the content presented (Tillema, 1994). Therefore, I developed the content of the professional development seminar with consideration of the teacher participant beliefs.

Although access to quality professional development opportunities is recognized as vitally important for teacher growth, most professional development available to teachers is distressingly inadequate (Borko, 2004) and virtually nonexistent in many materially poor countries. Progress has been made in the past few decades; however, little is known about precisely how and what teachers learn from professional development (Borko, 2004; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001). More research is needed on these topics. This study was designed to look closely at how teachers implement what they learn from the seminar.

This case study provided a look at key aspects of how to create a professional development program built on existing strengths that incorporated content chosen by teacher participants. This study provided the opportunity to understand the learning processes of individual teachers as they applied to internally identified needs, goals, and the implementation of reflective practice, which is a vital component in changing practice (Bean & Stevens, 2002; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Collett, 2011; Richardson, 1998; Schön, 1987; Shulman, 2004; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009).

Borko (2004) described Phase 1 research activities on professional development as research of one program at a single site. Focus is generally on the relationship between the program and teachers as learners. Data from a Phase 1 study can seed a larger Phase 2 and Phase 3 study. This study can provide useful information for larger studies. The tools

developed to identify teacher beliefs and current practices and the framework for professional development created for this study may be used in other contexts to support teacher professional growth. Moreover, in a synthesis of research on professional development, Guskey and Yoon (2009) explained that “any new professional development strategy should always begin with small scale, carefully controlled, pilot studies” (p. 498). The authors suggested that controlled studies of new approaches be examined in context and that teachers engaged in the new approach be compared to a comparable group of educators teaching in similar circumstances.

One of the most significant contributions of this study is reporting the observations of the process of the application of professional development models developed in the United States to a developing country context. The process of creating and implementing professional development content based on self-selected content and built on strengths can provide insight into how professional development can be adapted to fit specific contexts. Professional development models developed in the United States will not necessarily apply to all cultures and regions; therefore, understanding the adaptation process is important. Various cultural influences such as the degree of teacher autonomy, expectations of teacher or student performance, or the assumed availability of material and human resources could affect the applicability of U.S.-created programs. I identified roadblocks and challenges, which can contribute to future workable models for similar contexts.

With assistance from USAID, the government of Honduras is decentralizing education and giving more authority to the local level (USAID, 2016). More decisions regarding the allocation of funds for teacher professional development may be positively

affected by this change. Therefore, it is an opportune time to explore cost-effective, sustainable, and effective programs at the local level.

The scope of the study was limited because I was the sole investigator working within the timeline of my dissertation project however, the study will provide the foundation for a larger research agenda. For example, research might include follow-up inquiries into the status of the communities of practice after the study has ended, the sustainability of new practices, visiting the classrooms of the teacher participants a year later, how non-participants reacted to the professional development program, or comparing practices of non-participants to the study participants.

#### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate not only the need for quality professional development opportunities for teachers in developing countries, but also the need to consider teacher strengths and self-selected content when creating a professional development program (Bransford, et al., 2000; Brunkowski, 2004; Noordewier, Zwart, & Korthagen, 2009). The impact of teacher beliefs has been shown to have a great impact on teacher practice, yet more research is needed on how to reconcile teacher beliefs and current practices with professional development content. This need for quality professional development opportunities warrants inquiry into how to create and implement such programs. Collecting and analyzing data in regard to the research questions can shed light on how to develop a program that incorporates components that are responsive to local concerns. If education systems in developing countries are to respond to the educational needs of their students, then attention must be directed to supporting teacher learning and creating the structures to encourage changes in practice.

I have introduced a broad theoretical foundation and a general description of the methodology for this study. The following chapter will address theory in more detail and relevant research. Chapter III is devoted to describing the methodology in detail.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

Through social constructivist perspectives, I contemplated the social context of teachers in a developing country, constructing meaning in a professional development setting, how to implement an asset-driven professional development program, and how to best identify teacher current practices and the continuing social interaction necessary to sustain the learning. For the theoretical perspectives, social constructivism and the compatible perspectives of situated cognition, communities of practice, and cognitive apprenticeship are discussed with regards to defining each concept, considering seminal works on the topic and how the concepts apply to this study. Seminal works were identified by several methods, such as graduate coursework literature, repeated citations in peer-reviewed journal articles, and publications in which the concepts were originally defined or publications in which the author or authors are strongly identified with the concept. I included major works of theoretical and practical writings for situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship, and communities of practice. I chose to include situated cognition because the social, cultural, and physical contexts are important considerations in addressing the needs, assets, and requests of the teachers in this community in Honduras. Situated cognition is the foundation for the creation of cognitive apprenticeship; therefore, this model was a good fit for implementing an asset-driven professional development program (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The cognitive

apprenticeship model requires interaction between myself and teacher participants, which enables me to adjust for specific teacher needs. The communities of practice model is included because it supports participants taking the lead in how they choose to implement the professional development content. Honoring the voice of the teachers was an important concept that I wanted to respect throughout the project.

Published studies related to the efficacy of these concepts for professional development were chosen to support the inclusion of the concepts in the professional development model. These theoretical perspectives set the stage for exploration of the main components of the research.

A large body of published work exists for teacher professional development. The literature reviewed was narrowed down to professional development models and effective practices for delivering teacher professional development to specifically address issues relevant to this study. The literature chosen for review of effective practices was selected from graduate coursework sources, professional development sources from experience as a public-school teacher, and highly cited authors who were repeatedly referenced in published articles for the search terms “professional development,” “professional growth,” and “teacher change.”

In contrast to the prolific literature published on effective practices for professional development, very little is published on self-selected or teacher-selected content for professional development. I searched for the terms “differentiated professional learning,” “self-selected professional development content,” “teacher-selected professional development content,” “self-directed professional development,” “local and critical voices,” and “person-centered professional development” with

ProQuest and Google Scholar, but the searches provided disappointing results.

Thereafter, I searched the table of contents of the following journals for the previous five years: *Journal of Teacher Education*, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *Teacher Education and Practice*, *Professional Development in Education*, and *American Educational Research Journal*. Although I read through approximately 120 titles, the search did not yield any additional terms to search. However, the search did reveal two studies which are included in the review.

Although there is a lack of research regarding self-selected content, Knowles' (1984) principles of adult learning and assumptions of adult learners is a valuable resource. The principles are discussed in relation to the professional development seminar. For this research project, the term seminar refers to the five-day period where I met with the teacher participants in the library at School 1 and shared content regarding best practices in literacy instruction.

The literature review begins with a discussion of theoretical perspectives and then follows with a discussion of several concepts that are compatible with the social constructivist perspective. Socially constructing knowledge in a situated context is a good fit for addressing the research questions in the context of teacher participants in a developing country. This allows for flexibility in adjusting content for specific needs in the context of the research location.

With the compatible lens of critical theory, I explored “social and structural inequities that include and privilege some groups and members of society to the exclusion and marginalization of others” (Steinberg & Cannella, 2012, p. 4) so that the information presented during the professional development program is not simply

knowledge chosen by those who hold social and cultural capital, but instead, is mutually constructed by the teacher participants and the presenter (Reyes Cruz, 2008).

The topic of teacher beliefs is addressed by beginning with a belief system from one of the most cited books on the topic (Rokeach, 1968) and the complex task of defining beliefs is examined. Additionally, the impact of teacher beliefs on practice, substantive findings, and implications for understanding and studying teacher beliefs are discussed.

Next, the literacy processing theory is discussed as the foundation for the content of the professional development program (Clay, 1985). This is followed by literature on how to best deliver this content.

The literature review ends with one of the major components of this research; professional development and teacher growth. The discussion begins with professional development models and an adaptation to a model to incorporate practices that reflect social constructivist principles. Next, effective practices are addressed and synthesized with social constructivist concepts to create a professional development program.

## Theoretical Perspectives

### Social Constructivism

A social constructivist perspective is threaded through the fabric of this research project. The “social” in social constructivism relates to how meaning is generated (Crotty, 2011). Like Wenger (2000) and Brown et al. (1989), I believe that learning and applying complex concepts are socially constructed and situated in specific contexts; therefore, teachers need the time and space to interact and collaborate, to construct meaning from the information presented, and to have opportunities to explore practices in

the context of their classroom. I incorporated the models of communities of practice and cognitive apprenticeship into the structure of the professional development program because they are a good fit for an asset-driven model and offer the advantage of situated learning in a setting where context is important. I considered the social contexts of learning, --such as collaboration, the supporting practices of integrating a more knowledgeable other (for example, providing coaching)--and the value of situated contexts for exploring new practices--such as peer observation of trying new strategies or viewing videos of the practice in action. Vygotsky explained that “the higher functions of intellectual activity arise out of collective behavior, out of cooperation with the surrounding people, and from social experience” (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 196). In this view, knowledge is not constructed individually, but is co-constructed through social interaction and enculturation. The social aspects of this theoretical perspective complement the research questions. The practice of constructing knowledge socially should be a visible and transparent process because this construction requires sharing thoughts, insights, and questions verbally or possibly in written form. As a participant observer, this transparent process enabled me to observe one aspect of the development of a process of attaining a balance among teacher beliefs, self-selected content, and known best practices. Furthermore, the constructivist perspective supports the purpose of inquiry of the research questions. The questions are designed to explore *a* process, not *the* process of implementing a professional development and attaining a balance among beliefs, content, and best practices. Garrison (1997) explained that “the purpose of inquiry is not . . . to discover timeless truths. Rather inquiry seeks to arrive temporarily at

‘warranted assertions’ that aid in transforming the environment so that humanity may maintain and enjoy its precarious existence” (pp. 90-91).

Important principles of social constructivist theory include: (a) learning is constructed through apprenticeships in contextualized settings (Trent, Artiles, & Englert, 1998); (b) through cognitive apprenticeships, learners are given access to modes of discourse available exclusively in this specific environment (Rogoff, 1990; Trent et al., 1998); (c) a process of guided instruction is involved in an apprenticeship model (Trent et al., 1998); (d) learning and development are cultural historical occurrences that evolve with holistic, applied activity (Englert & Palinscar, 1991). These principles are woven throughout the professional development program and are manifested in the establishment of a community of practice, the creation of time and space for collaboration, and guided instruction through coaching. The principles are important because the concept of learning in a contextualized setting is relevant to a program in a developing country and the consideration of an asset-driven model. Also, guided instruction in an apprenticeship model is flexible enough to be adapted to the needs of the teacher participants.

Social constructivism was chosen to anchor this research project because it corresponds to research questions involving an asset-driven model and attaining a balance among current practices, self-selected content, and known best practices. Social constructivism is a better fit for the structure of this research project than other learning theories, such as radical constructivism, behaviorism, or cognitive perspectives. Radical constructivism focuses on the individual contribution to conceptual growth, while merely giving a nod to social and cultural influences as accommodated knowledge (von

Glaserfeld, 1995). The individual contribution to conceptual growth may be a powerful model for constructing knowledge; however, in developing this project for a setting in another country, I anticipated that social and cultural influences would be significant. Also, the design of the project relies on continued social collaboration and support; therefore, radical constructivism is not the best fit. Socially constructed knowledge and relationships are an important part of the asset-driven and the self-selected components of the research questions.

The behavioristic focus on stimuli and observable behavior is too narrow for the purposes of this study and is not the best fit for qualitative methodology. Collecting data on a topic such as teacher beliefs would be difficult in a stimulus/response model. Behaviorism is dependent on observable behavior, and I am interested in more than observing participant behavior; I want to understand their stories to better understand the complexities of teacher learning.

Cognitive perspectives offer insight into how information is learned and organized, but do not address social, cultural, or *in situ* aspects of learning. However, some aspects of this perspective extend the cognitive processes to the social constructivist realm, such as situated cognition and cognitive apprenticeship.

Situated cognition is an approach that emphasizes learning that is bound by the context, culture, and activity in which it was taught (Brown et al., 1989). Learning is not separated from “doing.” In this perspective, activity and context are important aspects in the process of learning. Brown et al. explained that “Situations might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity. Learning and cognition . . . are fundamentally situated” (1989, p. 32). Situated cognition is relevant because the learning was situated

with respect to social, cultural, and physical contexts. This is important because it addresses the component in Research Question 2 about attaining a balance among current practices, self-selected content, and known best practices. The physical contexts are important for what can and cannot be addressed in the seminar. Physical constraints limit available materials, resources, space, and activities. For example, after visiting a school, I realized that teaching guided reading would not be a method that the teachers could use. The classrooms did not have tables, books, support personnel, or room to pull a small group. Social and cultural contexts are also important. For example, student attendance was very low on certain days due to weather conditions or community events. Understanding the context is vital because false assumptions can occur about teacher growth without an accurate concept of the specific situation.

The self-selected component is also important. The content was not chosen in isolation, nor will it be applied in isolation. Considerations for social and cultural contexts affect what is chosen as well as how it is taught. The teachers must consider a host of factors when applying the strategies from the self-selected content such as school schedule, available resources, curriculum requirements from the government, and available support from colleagues.

Moreover, situated cognition works with an asset-driven model. In this specific situation, learning had to take place with respect to the local resources. The schools currently did not have funds to purchase additional materials. Everything from the seminar could be replicated in the classrooms. For example, many of the activities were adapted for presentation on the whiteboards in the teacher participants' classrooms. Other activities, such as Making Words, were adapted and created out of composition notebook



paper because it was the only available material. The asset-driven model also built on existing teacher knowledge and beliefs. The teachers previously learned the storybook method of teaching reading. We built on the concept of using a story to teach reading skills with the picture book read aloud.

To help explain how learning is inexorably linked to the context and activity in which it is situated, the authors used the metaphor of knowledge as a tool. One can possess a tool, yet not know how to use it, just as one can know formulas and equations, yet not know how to apply them. If formulas, equations, and other facts are learned in a decontextualized manner as simply a list of rules or definitions, then application of the knowledge in a meaningful way is unlikely. By contrast, imagine if one were to learn to use a tool in the context of a community of practitioners. The learning would involve activity, concept, and culture because learning involves all three (Brown et al., 1989). Knowledge is situationally determined through the context of activity, concept, and culture; therefore, it is constantly evolving as the context of the activity, concept, and culture changes. The authors used the example of a chisel. Learning to use a chisel as a carpenter involves a different activity, concept of utility, and culture than learning to use a chisel as a cabinet maker (Brown et al., 1989). The situated learning piece of the professional development program is an important part of this research study. Observing how teachers learn and collaborate when provided with a situated learning opportunity can reveal important information about situated cognition in the specific context of a developing country. Observations are needed in this context because anticipating every challenge that may arise in this specific context is not feasible. Using the tool of new strategies may involve a “different activity, concept of utility, and culture” than using the

same tool in a different setting. Situated cognition is incorporated into the professional development program by providing learning opportunities in the context of the classroom through coaching and peer observation.

Cognitive apprenticeship. Cognitive apprenticeship is a natural fit as a model of teaching for this professional development program because it was built on the concept of situated cognition (Brown et al., 1989). Abbott (2008) explained that the process involves modeling, breaking down the process, guiding practice, and then scaffolding support. During the scaffolding process, the learner knows where to go for support (Abbott, 2008). An important part of the guided practice is the concept of intersubjectivity, which involves “cognitive, social, and emotional interchange” (Rogoff, 1990, p. 9). Creating a process and attaining a balance *with* a group as opposed to *for* a group supports intersubjectivity. The theoretical premise of cognitive apprenticeship also aligns with the concepts of building relationships and building on existing assets or strengths and directly relates to Research Question 1. Also, it aligns with the concepts of the CLE theory of change, which is discussed in greater detail under critical theory.

One-day, one-shot staff development workshops are no longer the format of choice for many in the field of education. Ongoing sessions with opportunities to incorporate authentic teaching contexts, learning embedded in the work of school, guidance and feedback from an expert, and clear demonstrations create a powerful learning environment based on an apprenticeship approach (Dorn et al., 1998). A model that mirrors an apprenticeship design and involves “elements of schooling” was termed a cognitive apprenticeship by Collins, Brown, and Newman (1989). Cognitive apprenticeship involves the collaborative process of guided participation (Rogoff, 1990).

This model provides a learner with the opportunity to see the process to be learned, and the goal is to make learning visible (Collins, Brown, & Holum, 1991). Underlying guided participation is the concept of intersubjectivity, which is “a process involving cognitive, social, and emotional interchange” and a sharing of attention and purpose between the learner and more knowledgeable other (Rogoff, 1990, p. 9). Unlike a traditional apprenticeship in a trade or vocation such as carpentry, where the skills to be learned are concrete, a cognitive apprenticeship must be intentional about verbalizing the cognitive processes or otherwise making them concrete such as diagramming. Collins et al. (1991) explained that teachers must:

- Identify the processes of the task and make them visible to students;
- Situate abstract tasks in authentic contexts, so that students understand the relevance of the work; and
- Vary the diversity of the situations and articulate the common aspects so that students can transfer what they learn. (p. 3)

Methods to support expertise for the learner are modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection, and exploration (Collins et al., 1991). In this professional development program, cognitive apprenticeship was incorporated through coaching and “Coaching is the thread running through the entire apprenticeship experience” (Collins et al., 1991, p. 2).

In the cognitive apprenticeship model, I thoughtfully engaged in the role as the more knowledgeable other to balance the role with a critical perspective. I tried to dispel the image of myself as an authority figure, but rather, as a fellow educator sharing information in the areas that the teacher participants requested. For this reason, I resisted evaluating the teachers during the observations.

Coaching. In this context, coaching refers to the mentoring and guiding of teachers to support improved practice, develop competence, and “promote or enhance a cognitive shift” (Collet, 2011, p. 15). As a situative practice, coaching supports learning in the context of instructional practice in the classroom. In a 1995 study on teacher learning, Englert and Tarrant found that teachers need ongoing support from a knowledgeable other through study group discussions as they enacted new practices that created a common vision. However, the authors cautioned that the goals and choice of the teachers are an important component (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

Coaching is important for supporting change in practice. Research confirms the positive effect of coaching on literacy growth (Carlisle & Berebitsky, 2011; Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Risko, Roller, Cummins, Bean, Block and Anders (2009) found that expert guidance was more effective when coupled with the “learning and doing” approaches. In other words, coaching combined with opportunities for application, such as enacting new practices in the classroom, are more effective. For example, in this study I built in time to observe the teachers utilizing a new strategy of their choice. One teacher chose a Making Words activity, and we discussed the implementation after the lesson and things to consider for the Making Words activity. Literacy coaching is a form of embedded professional development and supports positive outcomes for student learning (Toll, 2005). The situated aspect of coaching is a valuable piece of the program. Johnson (1996) maintained that opportunities for learning need to be embedded into the ongoing work of the school. Coaching and community of practice (CoP) create learning opportunities that are entrenched in the ongoing work of the school.

Shulman (2004) cautions that coaching alone is not enough to elicit change. Teachers need the opportunities to participate in CoP that promote reflection and “concrete and observable models of teachers engaging in the new practice” (Shulman, 2004, p. 405).

Communities of practice. Historically, people “have formed communities that share cultural practices reflecting their collective learning” (Wenger, 2000, p. 229). In their model of situated learning, Lave and Wenger explained that engagement in a CoP is involved in the learning process (1998). A community of practice is defined in three ways: joint enterprise, a shared vision that binds people together, and a shared repertoire of resources developed over time by the members (Wenger, 1999). Simply put, “Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Wenger & Trayner, n.d., p.1). Wenger explained that whether one is a novice or an expert, knowing always involves two components: competence (the standards the community established over time) and the continued experience as a member of the community (2000). Learning takes place when the two components are incongruent as competence pulls at ongoing experience or vice versa (Wenger, 2000). Communities of practice are created to be a mutually engaging tool to support professional learning; however, Wenger cautioned that they can be “cradles of the human spirit or its cages” (2000, p. 230). Articulating elements of progress such as the level of learning energy, the depth of social capital, and the degree of self-awareness can help CoP to maintain focus and effectiveness (Wenger, 2000).

In studies of teacher collaboration, two important ideas that emerge are the importance of shared experiences and decision-making and professional discourse (Bransford et al., 2000). Collaboration has shown to increase student achievement and teachers who participate in consistent, structured collaborative dialogues become more confident in their ability to attend to problems (Pugach & Johnson, 1995).

Establishing a community of practice will provide a structure to maintain professional collaboration and continued professional growth. Creating a network of teaching professionals who are involved in changing their practice in similar ways can help to sustain motivation (Lieberman & McLaughlin, 1992). An additional benefit is that community structures can be a means to create and preserve enduring organizational memory (Smith, 2009). This contributes to sustainability of a program. Creating a CoP is important for the social interaction aspect of learning. Putnam and Borko stated that participating in a professional community is as important as intensive training (2000). For teachers to apply new practices from the meaning they have constructed, they need the opportunity to participate “in a professional community that discusses new teacher materials and strategies and that supports the risk taking and struggle entailed in transforming practice” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993, p. 15). The inclusion of a CoP in the research program was an important component because it provided a space for teachers to collaboratively process the new information and to observe how their peers begin to negotiate, or choose not to negotiate, a compromise between traditional pedagogy and a more learner-centered pedagogy. I anticipated that this component would be a key element in how teachers would choose, or not choose, to align their current

practices with the new information from the professional development or to negotiate a compromise.

In the program, a community of practice was established by supporting professional relationships from the first day of the seminar. Wenger (2000) explained that knowing about each other is one aspect of developing social capital in the CoP. In the first days of the seminar, time was devoted to discussions of specific prompts, enabling the participants to share personal experiences (Appendix K: Discussion Prompts). As a graduate student, I experienced this activity in a qualitative research class. Students shared with the group about a specific event. This enabled everyone to create an identity for fellow students beyond their first name and physical attributes and contributed to a sense of community. From that point on, class discussions were more robust, and connections were developed among students.

Wenger cautioned that a CoP needs to maintain a focus, energy, and mutual engagement to remain effective (2000). Based on Wenger's (2000) recommendations from three tables, I created a condensed guide for CoP in plain language to support the ongoing work of the group (see Appendix L: Maintaining a Community of Practice).

### Critical Theory

Critical theory addresses issues of social justice and is included in this research to promote structures that encourage empowerment and voice for the teacher participants and guard against oppressive practices and marginalization. The concepts of empowerment and voice are consistent with this project because the initial impetus for asking the research questions was my observation of the lack of professional development opportunities for teachers in developing countries. Moreover, the setting for

the study was a postcolonial developing country. The concept of decolonizing knowledge, the CLE theory of change, and Asset-Based Community Development are discussed as critical theory components of the research.

Decolonizing knowledge. In the realm of critical theory, demands for decolonizing knowledge have existed for decades (Reyes Cruz, 2008). Decolonizing knowledge refers to “who gets to claim knowledge, how knowledge is claimed, and how is one to go about gaining knowledge” (Reyes Cruz, 2008, p. 651). As a researcher, I am committed to this perspective and to ensuring that I do not contribute to the structures of oppression. In this professional development program, the teacher participants chose what they wanted to learn related to literacy teaching. Although I presented the basic concepts of the literacy processing theory, the teacher participants constructed their own meaning and determined which pieces were meaningful to their teaching situation and what would be integrated into their practices. Smith (2005) explained that decolonization “does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge” (p. 39), but about acknowledging our concerns and coming to understand the knowledge for our own purposes. The design of this project provided teachers with the opportunity to self-select what literacy content they deemed important. Through experimentation, coaching, and collaboration, they ultimately created the narrative of what knowledge was applicable to their context and essential for improving teaching practices. Their voices will contribute to the body of knowledge about effective teaching practices.

Community learning exchange theory of change. The foundation of the CLE theory of change is built on five axioms (see Appendix O), three ecologies of knowing



(self, organization, community), and the dynamics of relationships, assets, stories, place, politic, and action (Guajardo et al., 2016). According to this theory, relationships are at the core of community development and educational change. The three ecologies provide a way to organize learning experiences from the individual perspective as well as the “big picture” perspective. They are a good fit for the first research question because they provide another way of evaluating the process for the best fit.

These ecologies were created to support meaning making before, during, and after a CLE experience. The ecologies of knowing support the application of critical theory, beyond decolonization and asset-driven models. They provided an “other way of knowing” about the process and the influence of the system components of organization and community.

The CLE theory of change is affiliated with Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory (M. Militello, personal communication, May 15, 2017). According to the theory, environmental systems influence human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). There are five interconnected environmental systems: macrosystem, mesosystem, exosystem, microsystem, and chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). The microsystem refers to a person’s home and family environment; the mesosystem relates to the interactions that occur among all the systems; the exosystem refers to contexts or situations which the person has no control over, but is still impacted by; and the chronosystem relates to change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This theory has had a major influence on the social sciences and the study of how environments influence human development (Jeronimus, Riese, Sanderman, & Ormel, 2014). The concept of environmental influences is fundamental to the CLE theory of change. This theory incorporates three ecologies of

knowing which “organize our thinking and learning experiences from the micro to the meso and on to the macro levels, or spheres, in which we experience life” (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 53).

The CLE theory of change fit the purposes of this research project on several levels. The authors explained that with this theory, “the learning process is first and foremost social” and that the co-construction of knowledge occurs through social relationships (Guajardo et al., 2016, p. 45). This is compatible with and complementary of social constructivist theory. Moreover, the theory of change is useful for the specific context of the study because the theory addresses the influence of system components such as community and organization. This system view prompted me to look beyond the seminar setting and to consider the interaction of various systems.

During the process of creating the professional development program, there were certain high-priority components considered for inclusion. Asset-driven, context-specific, and relationship-oriented components were high priorities. The importance of these components was based on my previous experiences in developing countries, my experience as an educator, and my concept of social justice that was developed from my doctoral coursework. These components were included as separate topics; however, the CLE theory of change provided a model that wove all the components together in a cohesive platform and brought other components to the forefront, such as story. Wolcott (2001) cautioned against introducing theory at the beginning as an obligation and pretending that it guided the research all along, but instead suggested integrating the theory at the point where the “concerns actually entered your thinking” (p. 77). This is the process that brought the CLE theory of change into play in this research. His

recommendation to “discuss the point at which you (desperately?) longed for some theoretical or conceptual framework . . . to help bring data together and make sense of them” (Wolcott, 2001, p. 78) describes my process of integrating the CLE theory of change.

Asset-based community development. This model supports a critical theory perspective by focusing on strengths, rather than approaching community development from a deficit perspective. Focusing on strengths is vital for the success and sustainability of the program. The asset-driven approach is derived from the community development field. Asset-based community development (ABCD) is a model that claims to be sustainable, built on the premise that communities possess the (often unrecognized) assets to create local economic opportunities (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation, n.d.). The asset-based model contrasts the traditional deficiency-oriented social services model (McKnight & Kretzmann, 1996). The effectiveness of the inside-out structure for community development is echoed in Corbett and Fikkert’s (2014) book about poverty alleviation in developing countries. A fundamental piece of ABCD is the focus on social relationships and viewing relationships as capital (Collaborative for Neighborhood Transformation, n.d.). While ABCD is a complex model that goes far beyond the rudimentary description provided above, I believe the basic components of the model can provide beneficial concepts for teacher learning, especially in materially poor regions. As with ABCD, one of the first steps to develop a sustainable program is to identify assets. Assets should be identified at the individual teacher, team, school, and community levels. Next, the needs of the community should be identified internally, as opposed to an outside organization imposing its values and perception of needs. And finally, social

relationships are supported through establishing a community of practice and utilizing social networks in the broader community for volunteer and material resources. The asset-driven approach is integrated with data collected from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey (Appendix H). Teacher participants are asked to identify strengths in the community, school, and classroom.

Effective professional development programs are learner-centered and build on the strengths and interests of the participants (Bransford et al., 2000). When providing professional development for teachers in developing countries, I believe that these concepts are even more essential in the planning of a program. To provide the most effective and culturally sensitive experience that fosters sustainability, the program must include identifying the strengths and assets of the teachers and school community. Noordewier et al. (2009) described an approach which focuses on qualities and commitments that already exist in teachers. They explained that more attention should be focused on the strengths and culture of the school community and that research has shown positive results when participants feel their strengths are acknowledged (Noordewier et al, 2009).

In addition to honoring the teachers' existing knowledge and respecting their ability to self-identify needs, the asset-driven approach has another benefit. The teacher-change and learning-to-teach literature has demonstrated that teachers employ significant control over decisions of how and if to implement change (Richardson, 1990). McLaughlin (1990) stated that local will and local capacity are what matters most for achieving educational change, not policy mandates. Similarly, the Rand Change Agent

Study conducted in the 1970s revealed the vital role that the local context plays in implementing successful change in education (Berman & Pauly, 1975).

In a foreword to Wolcott's book (1977), Max Abbott wrote: "Certainly school people can benefit from outside help . . . but they will benefit only if they receive help in doing what they think needs to be done, in doing what they believe in doing. They need to be partners in a venture, not the victims of that venture" (p. xi). Therefore, if the teacher ultimately controls whether or not they implement change or if they implement it with fidelity, then it is reasonable to solicit their input for the content of a professional development program.

#### Teacher Beliefs

The literature on teacher beliefs covers a wide array of research agendas (Kagan, 1990). The review of the literature is focused on the topics applicable to this study and covers defining beliefs, describing a belief system, and the impact that teacher beliefs have on practice.

Any consideration of teacher beliefs must include a discussion of the definition of beliefs. Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, and Cuthbert (1988) stated that "No single definition of belief is widely accepted in the educational research community" (p. 53), but they drew from the literature of educational philosophers and anthropologists to collaboratively define beliefs as "a proposition or statement of relation among things accepted as true" (p. 52). However, they used "an attitude consistently applied to an activity" as a working definition of belief for their research (p. 54). Dewey (1933) acknowledged the importance of belief and defined it as "something beyond itself by which its value is tested; it makes an assertion about some matter of fact or some

principle or law” (p. 6). Rokeach (1968) defined beliefs as “any simple proposition, conscious or unconscious, inferred from what a person says or does, capable of being preceded by the phrase, ‘I believe that . . .’” (p. 113). He elaborated that beliefs may be descriptive, evaluative, or prescriptive, but most often, all three components are existent in beliefs. Defining teacher beliefs is described by Pajares (1992) as a “messy construct” (p. 307), and he explained that studying teacher beliefs is difficult due to various definitions, conceptualizations, and understanding of belief systems. He explained that “beliefs, attitudes, and values form an individual’s belief system” (1992, p. 314).

The concept of beliefs is a complex one, and a single definition cannot encompass every situation or context; however, Kagan’s definition adds a layer of meaning to the concept by including the important perspective that teachers may not always be aware of their beliefs and defined it as “unconsciously held assumptions about students, classrooms, and the academic material to be taught” (1992, p. 65). Brown and Cooney (1982) explained that beliefs are time and context specific. Complicating the issue are the various terms used in the literature for discussing teacher beliefs such as perceptions, attitudes, values, dispositions (Pajares, 1992).

Pajares (1992) suggested that researchers differentiate between general belief systems and educational beliefs. He further narrowed the suggestion by distinguishing specifically what the educational beliefs are about, such as educational beliefs about teacher efficacy, epistemological beliefs, causes of performance, self-concept, self-efficacy, and specific subjects or disciplines. For this study, the particular beliefs of interest related to “specific subjects or disciplines.” This helped to narrow the focus of the study. In addition to narrowing the focus, it was necessary to identify a working

definition of beliefs. Various components of the definitions of beliefs presented are coalesced into a working definition for this study: conscious or unconscious assumptions about academic material to be taught and how students learn to read that are context specific. The definition was created from existing definitions in the literature and expanded to include specific educational beliefs regarding a subject or discipline. The beliefs measured on the survey relate to educational beliefs, specifically how to teach a specific subject. It is important to include both conscious and unconscious assumptions in the definition, as teachers may not be aware of all the assumptions they believe until given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on their beliefs in a specific context. Finally, previously existing beliefs or those developed or refined during the seminar may apply to a specific context.

It is well established in literature that beliefs have a profound impact on teaching practices and the implementation of literacy instruction (Fuentes, 2008; Harste & Burke, 1977; Nesper, 1987). Nesper concluded that beliefs are a more powerful predictor of behavior than knowledge (1987). Teacher beliefs impact how they manage, organize, and deliver reading instruction (Al-Arfaj, 2001; Putnam, 1982). In one study, Putnam (1982) investigated six kindergarten teachers who had different approaches to reading instruction. Three of the teachers believed in and practiced a traditional bottom-up approach to teaching reading, while the other three teachers provided what Putnam described as a “literate environment” (p. 8) approach to reading, or a top-down model. The teachers who practiced a traditional approach focused more on skills and quizzes and had a more structured classroom. The teachers who provided a “literate environment” focused more on authentic texts, class discussion, and other interactive activities that

involved texts. Teacher beliefs directly impact instruction and the organization of the classroom. Kagan claimed that the more one reads the research on teacher beliefs, “the more strongly one suspects that this piebald of personal knowledge lies at the very heart of teaching” (1992, p. 85). However, like many other studies, the research by Putnam occurred in a developed, economically stable country. Research data on teacher beliefs and practice is needed from locations in low-income and middle-income countries as well. An ethnocentric perspective of assuming that research needs to be conducted only in developed countries and the results can be applied to developing areas where circumstances and challenges may be vastly different does not justly serve educators. Beliefs are developed through direct experience with the object of belief, through authority figures such as family, friends, or religious figures, or through secondhand experiences (Rokeach, 1968). These experiences can vary from country to country and culture to culture. The influence of a religious authority or of family members may be more prevalent in one culture, yet may have an insignificant influence in another. Therefore, the development of a general belief system may vary from culture to culture. However, the development of specific beliefs, such as educational beliefs, may have an even larger variance between countries and cultures. Exposure to experiences, resources, educational opportunities, professional expectations, and thinking processes can vary drastically from one geographic region to another. For example, in my professional teaching career, the thought process of reflecting on a lesson and evaluating the results was common after the 1990s. As I have observed teachers from other countries, I realized that reflective practice is a foreign concept in some areas. When differences exist in such things as experiences, resources, and the quality of education available, then it is



reasonable to conclude that these variables could affect how beliefs are formed (and changed) by teachers from different countries and cultures. More information is needed on the beliefs of teachers who live, learn, and practice in a low- or middle-income country.

Observing the structure of how a classroom is organized and how instruction is delivered can reveal clues to a teacher's beliefs. However, teacher beliefs cannot be determined by directly observing behavior alone because instructional practices can be used for many different reasons (Kagan, 1992). Moreover, direct questions regarding specific beliefs can be counterproductive since teachers may not be aware of their own beliefs or possess the language to label them (Kagan, 1992). A multi-faceted approach is needed to determine teacher beliefs. For this study, I used multiple tools and resources to identify teacher beliefs which include a survey and semi-structured interview. This information was combined with observations of classroom instruction and peer discussions to provide a broad picture of each teacher's beliefs.

The ultimate goal of professional development is to expand teacher knowledge and "to improve learning for educators and students" (Mizell, 2010, p. 5). Guskey claimed that the most significant change in teacher beliefs occurs after new instructional practices are implemented and a change in student outcomes is observed (1985). Fenstermacher (1978) explained that for teachers to change their practice, relevant evidence must be presented that relates to their existing beliefs. Therefore, identifying teacher beliefs before new knowledge is presented is an important component of teacher learning. This speaks directly to the second research question of the study. In creating the content for the professional development program, I considered the teachers' beliefs and

current methods of teaching. For example, one item on the Teacher Belief and Practices Survey (TBPS) (Appendix I) states, “The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce them correctly.” If the teachers *strongly agree* with this statement, then I can incorporate strategies for problem-solving unknown words and then relate them to comprehension strategies. This acknowledges the importance of recognizing words (their existing belief) and extends this to problem-solving strategies which encourage the student to think about the story and what would make sense for the unknown word. Rather than using a worksheet with words for students to memorize, the strategies can be taught using continuous text. Relating the new instructional practices to their existing beliefs can foster a change in practice, and if the new instructional practices result in a change in student outcomes, then a change in teacher beliefs can occur (Fenstermacher, 1978; Guskey, 1985).

In a study that investigated how to bridge the gap between new information and teacher beliefs, Tillema (1994) found that efforts to promote a change in cognition must consider pre-existing beliefs. In an echo of Goodman (1988), Tillema (1994) explained that beliefs act as a filter through which new knowledge is screened and ultimately determines which components are accepted and integrated into practice. The findings suggest that professional development training must consider the professional belief system and that acquiring knowledge is not simply adding to a base, but restructuring and refining existing knowledge. The second research question for my study explored how this restructuring and refining process occurs.

According to the congruence hypothesis, new knowledge is more readily accepted if it is congruent with the participant’s current beliefs about teaching, the teaching

approach by the trainer, and the training design (Tillema, 1994). A more “constructive, interventional-oriented” adaptation of that hypothesis includes knowledge of pre-existing teacher beliefs and connecting it to the training content (Tillema, 1994, p. 603). Tillema conducted a quantitative study to determine whether different training designs and how they were executed would lead to different effects, depending on the consideration of pre-existing teacher beliefs. The participants were 146 teachers who were taking coursework for a special education certification. The teachers were randomly chosen for the treatment condition and were not informed about the two design approaches. One training design was an experience-based approach, and the other training design was a concept-based approach. A questionnaire was used to assess beliefs before the training and after. Positive effects were found with participants in both training designs where the trainer had access to the teachers’ pre-existing beliefs.

Shulman (2004) described vision, which others may describe as belief, and argued that adopting new teaching practices depends on three interdependent factors: vision, motivation, and ability. For the vision factor, Shulman explained that it is important to ask how compatible the vision for change is with the teacher’s current vision. Another important factor of change are the collective visions that exist in the teaching community. It is essential to examine the elements of not only the teachers individually, but also of the teacher’s community. Teacher beliefs need to be identified at the individual level, but the collective visions of the community are also an important factor to consider when implementing change through professional development. Therefore, identifying the needs and goals of the community is just as important as identifying individual teacher beliefs. This underscores the importance of surveying the community of teachers *before* the

professional development content is planned. The process of surveying the community and building the professional development according to the goals of the community can further elucidate the restructuring and refining process that teachers experience when acquiring new knowledge.

Attempting to convert teachers to a new perspective that may impact their beliefs should be approached with caution and sensitivity. The possibility of researchers or trainers overstepping privileges when implementing change must be acknowledged. Noddings (1997) eloquently expressed this dilemma.

Today, I am also convinced that we make a sad and deep error when we try to convert all teachers to a particular way of thinking or to a particular set of methods. Instead we should help teachers to do the best they can with their own educational philosophies and their own beliefs. We should help them to build on their own strengths, just as we hope that they will build on the strengths of their students. . . . Engaged in dialogue, encouraged to reflect on their own practice but allowed to keep their own beliefs, teachers might well begin to revise their methods and extend their pedagogical repertoires. (p. 173)

Noddings' suggestion of building on the strengths of teachers so that they may begin to extend their range of teaching practices is a valid concept to investigate. While the literature demonstrates that change in teaching practice involves a change in beliefs (Fenstermacher, 1978; Guskey, 1985), it does not necessarily mean that all teachers involved in professional development must change their beliefs at the same rate or depth. A close look at how teachers reconcile their beliefs with new pedagogical approaches will enhance the transparency of this process.

As the study evolved, incompatibilities of belief systems with best practices were considered and analyzed. It was my intent that the mediating forces of enactment and reflection would help to bridge the gap between any incompatibilities. The teachers' role

in choosing content for the professional development program ideally helped me to support their learning.

Implementing new practices does not need to be an “all or nothing” proposition. Incorporating elements of best practices into an existing instructional model requires negotiation and support. Zoch (2015) illustrated that learner-centered practices can be incorporated into a strictly skills-based model. Working in a school where high-stakes testing preparation was a required focus, Zoch reported that a literacy coach could help teachers embed test preparation language and test objectives into a reading workshop model. An essential part of this change was establishing a community of collaborative learners. This required a paradigm shift for the teachers, from thinking of professional development as something done to them to an understanding that their group could generate knowledge and solutions (Zoch, 2015). With the support of a literacy coach, the teachers made incremental changes to their instructional model to move towards more learner-centered practices. In this case, incorporating a reflective and collaborative piece in the model helped teachers to make changes in their instructional practice while maintaining much of the pre-existing classroom structure. Additional observation of how teachers implement reflective and collaborative practices to assist with the incorporation of new instructional practices is needed to help understand the process of change.

Considering teacher beliefs and the relationship to professional development content was an important part of this project. The educational beliefs of the teacher participants were an unknown variable at the beginning of the project; therefore, understanding the relationship between beliefs and professional development was an evolving process. Addressing the research questions determines how the process unfolds.

The data collected in this study provided insight as to how to create professional development within a specific context and location.

### Measuring Teacher Beliefs

Measuring a “messy construct” such as teacher beliefs is a challenging task. cautioned that making inferences about beliefs is difficult because most people are not able to precisely articulate their beliefs (1968). In reference to Rockeach, Pajares explained it is “for this reason that beliefs must be inferred from what people say, intend, and do,” and that they cannot be directly measured or observed (1992, p. 314). Consequently, the teacher participants in this study were not asked direct questions such as, “What are your beliefs regarding . . .?”. Instead, teachers were asked to identify with certain scenarios or respond to specific materials or activities because direct questions can be counterproductive (Kagan, 1992). Teachers may not have the language to label their specific beliefs or be aware of them (Kagan, 1992).

Teacher beliefs have been identified and categorized for decades with several options of measurement tools available. The Literacy Orientation Survey (LOS) contains 30 questions and categorizes results into beliefs like a traditional, eclectic, or constructivist teacher (Lenski, Wham, & Griffey, 1997). The LOS aligned most closely with the needs for this study, and I adapted the structure of the survey to minimize the impact of socially desirable responses (Harter, 1982). The survey was also a theoretical match with the professional development program that was designed from a social constructivist perspective. The delivery format for the program was designed to include collaboration and reflection opportunities for the teachers and implementation of social

constructivist instructional methods. Therefore, this survey provided me with the specific data I needed regarding teaching beliefs.

A panel of experts reviewed the items for content validity, and a draft was administered to 110 teachers. The results were analyzed and administered an additional three times to refine the instrument. As an additional corroboration of validity, a group of surveyed teachers were also observed to confirm teachers' self-reports and practice.

Duffy and Metheny created a survey, the Propositional Inventory, to measure teacher beliefs about reading instruction as they relate to the categories of basal and linear skills, interest, and integrated whole and natural language (1978). This survey did not ask questions that were relevant to the development of the professional development program. The program was not developed to specifically address the whole language, natural language, or basal reader method of teaching reading. The concepts and the language were dated.

Other surveys considered for this project included the revised Teacher Belief Survey, which categorizes teacher beliefs into constructivist or behaviorist practices in instruction and management. The constructivist practices component of the survey could have been helpful, but the limiting choice of constructivist or behaviorist did not serve my purposes.

The Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) measures beliefs and places them on a continuum from phonics, to skills, to whole language (Benjamin, 2003; DeFord, 1985). This survey was tedious due to the specific nature of the questions and use of jargon such as "inflectional endings," making it difficult to translate. However, the continuum of phonics, skills, and whole language would not have revealed helpful data.

The professional development program was not designed for strictly phonics or whole language.

The survey is only one piece of the triangulation puzzle of determining teacher beliefs. Considering this nature of this “messy construct,” a survey alone is not sufficient to learn about beliefs (Pajares, 1992). Observations and interviews were also employed to develop an understanding of each teacher’s educational beliefs.

#### Teacher Change and Current Practices

There are many aspects to teacher professional growth, and understanding the process of learning can support effective professional development opportunities.

According to the current literature on teacher change, “the relationships between teacher professional development programs and changes in teachers’ beliefs and practices are quite complex” (Dyson, 2007, p. 3). For a program to have an impact on current practices, it is beneficial for teachers to be receptive to the content (Guskey, 2002).

Therefore, understanding what teachers think about current practices and student learning are important considerations for creating a professional development program that may require a change in practice. Change is a process and can be accomplished through significant learning experiences (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997). Clarke and Hollingsworth explained, “If we are to facilitate the professional development of teachers, we must understand the process by which teachers grow professionally and the conditions that support and promote that growth” (2002, p. 947). There has been a shift from change as teachers being passive recipients of “something that is done to teachers” to change as a complex process that involves learning (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002, p. 948).



In order to develop a productive research project, create an effective professional development program for the project, and address the research questions, knowledge of the process of change is vital. Senger (1998) described teacher change as a recursive and multidirectional process. Teachers may make small changes, but revert to prior practices before making another attempt to change (Senger, 1998). Fullan (2001) explained that there are not specific rules from the literature on how to implement change, but broad guidelines and the details will vary for each local context. Fullan and Miles (1991) further explained that “change is a journey, not a blueprint” (p. 753). The authors elaborated by stating that planning models for complex social change do not work and what is needed is a guided journey (1992).

The design of this research project incorporated current knowledge of the change process and consequently, the data gathered contributed to what is known about implementing professional development programs and sustaining change. Much of the teacher change literature has focused on how teachers responded to externally mandated change (Borko, Livingston, & Shavelson, 1990). Therefore, it is important for research to examine how the teacher change process unfolds when the change is driven by internal goals. Senger explained that “understanding the internal processes individual teachers go through as they change is critical to researchers and educators” (1998, p. 201).

Change driven by internal goals is a concept that aligns with the self-selection of professional development content. Self-selection provides teachers the opportunity to identify their needs and choose content that supports their goals. In a study conducted in Chicago public schools, teachers were given the opportunity to self-select their professional development (Brunkowski, 2004). Results indicated that self-selection has a

positive impact on instructional practice and participant learning, but the professional development must include reflective and research-based components (Brunkowski, 2004). These are promising results, but more research is needed to understand this process.

While large scale research on the self-selection of professional development content is sparse, adult learning theory provides valuable information regarding how adults learn best. Knowles' (1984) principles of adult learning state that adult learning differs from child learning; adults need to be engaged in planning and assessment of their content, experience plays an important role in their learning, they are interested in content that has an immediate impact, and their learning tends to be problem-based, rather than focused on content.

#### Literacy Theory and Best Practices

The framework for the professional development program provides a structure for incorporating the most effective practices for teacher learning. The specific content that fits within the framework is information on the best practices in literacy instruction.

This program incorporates the tenets of the literacy processing theory and is based upon Clay's observations that early intervention is best (1985). Clay's theoretical perspective aligns with a social constructivist view (Vukelich & Christie, 2009). Each component works under the umbrella of social constructivism. Clay's theory is the foundation on which the literacy instruction was created for the professional development program and was chosen, in part, because of my graduate training in this theory as a Reading Recovery teacher and my experience as a teacher in witnessing the effectiveness of Clay's methods. The theory is comprised of straight-forward, well-defined components

which can easily support the creation and implementation of a professional development program. These features provided compatibility with each of my research questions and provided a foundation from which the teachers' self-selected content could be addressed. This helped to support the process of attaining balance with best practices. Other theories of reading such as schema theory (Rumelhart, 1977) and transactional theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) offer useful perspectives; however, most theories such as these do not explicitly focus on building strengths or emergent reader behavior or provide such well-defined tenets as the literacy processing theory.

Through years of research, reflection, and observation, Clay (2001, 2005) developed the literacy processing theory, and the main tenets are:

- Reading is a complex problem-solving task;
- Reading and writing are reciprocal processes;
- Literacy learning involves reading and writing continuous texts;
- Children construct their own meaning;
- Children come with varying levels of knowledge;
- Children take different paths to learning;
- Literacy learning involves change over time which requires close observation;
- Building on a child's strengths makes it easier to learn;
- Children need opportunities to read and write in order to extend their own learning.

Clay explained that "instruction should provide learners with opportunities that are open-ended . . . allowing the learner to expand . . . his or her knowledge" (2001, p. 12). Therefore, completing worksheets and isolated tasks were not a part of this program

because they are not authentic reading and writing tasks. To develop proficient readers and writers, students need abundant opportunities to read and write. Simply stated, “Few can learn to do anything well without the opportunity to engage in whatever is being learned” (Allington, 1977, p. 60). These opportunities must include a wide variety of authentic texts in various genres and interests. Authentic writing opportunities must include sufficient time to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Completing a multiple-choice worksheet in which the student must identify the topic sentence of a paragraph does not provide a writing opportunity. Clay also underscored the importance of flexibility in the reading process, stating that reading is “a message-getting, problem-solving activity which increases in power and flexibility the more that it is practiced” and that proficient readers use several sources of information (2001, p. 1).

When put into practice, the literacy processing theory supports a learner’s problem-solving strategies so that the learner can construct meaning from text and express meaning through creating text. Based on the foundation of the literacy processing theory, a professional development program will support teacher participants in learning how to work with students to help them develop problem-solving skills in reading and writing. Literacy instruction will build on the strengths of the students and will involve authentic reading and writing opportunities of continuous text. Building on strengths at the student level echoes one of the foundational components of the research project, which is to build on the strengths of the community and participating teachers. This positive approach, rather than a deficit approach, is a compelling reason to include the literacy processing theory in the development of the professional development program.

Aligning with social constructivist principles, the learner is actively engaged in the learning process and experiences reading and writing events, rather than completing activities focused on isolated skills. Moreover, the literacy processing theory asserts that literacy learning occurs by the reading and writing of continuous texts (Clay, 2001, 2005).

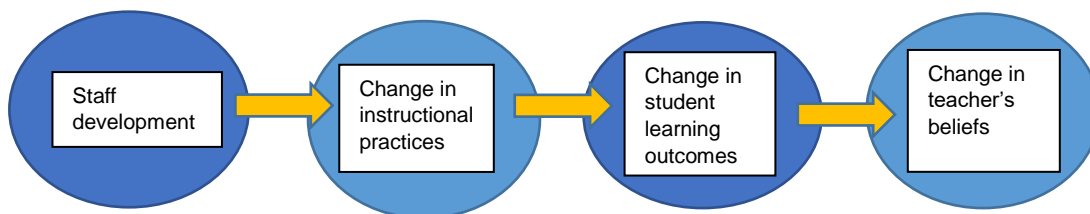
While Clay's theory complements many components of social constructivist perspectives, a specific focus on the social aspects of literacy learning is absent. In addition to including the tenets of the literacy processing theory in the professional development program, the social aspects of literacy learning were integrated into the instruction for the teachers. The teachers had the opportunity to write about personal experiences and share the writing socially and, in turn, the teachers were encouraged to explore those practices with their students. The teachers were able to directly experience the powerful learning potential of an authentic writing experience.

Teachers need to be familiar with a variety of effective literacy practices, instructional interventions, and management techniques to help students in the reading process (Fuentes, 2008). According to Routman (2000), effective teaching which is drawn from current research and practice is essential for a literacy program. The teacher's knowledge is crucial in providing "learners the balance of skills, strategies, materials, and social and emotional support they need" (Routman, 2000, p. 15). Components of a comprehensive literacy instruction program also include demonstrations and participating in discussions. In 2000, the term "comprehensive literacy instruction" was replaced by evidence-based or research-based best practices (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011). I use the term best practices to refer to comprehensive literacy instruction which is evidence-

based. This refers to “an instructional practice with a record of success that is both trustworthy and valid” (Morrow & Gambrell, 2011, p. 17).

### Professional Development Models

What was once viewed as a neat, linear process is now understood as a complex system of interactions among multiple domains. Guskey’s (1985) linear model describes teacher change as occurring after instructional changes have been implemented and an observable change in student learning outcomes has occurred. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of Guskey’s model.



*Figure 1.* Guskey’s linear model.

Clarke and Hollingsworth created an empirically founded model incorporating four domains to create a growth network called the Interconnected Model (2002) (Figure 2). Based on data from three studies, their model demonstrates how change in one domain affects change in another domain, and change can occur in any of the four domains. The type of change that occurs will depend upon the domain in which the change occurs. The authors identified six perspectives on change in relation to teachers: (a) change as training, (b) change as adaptation, (c) change as personal development, (d) change as local reform, (e) change as systematic restructuring, or (f) change as growth or learning (2002). The growth network is created through the mediating practices of enactment and reflection.

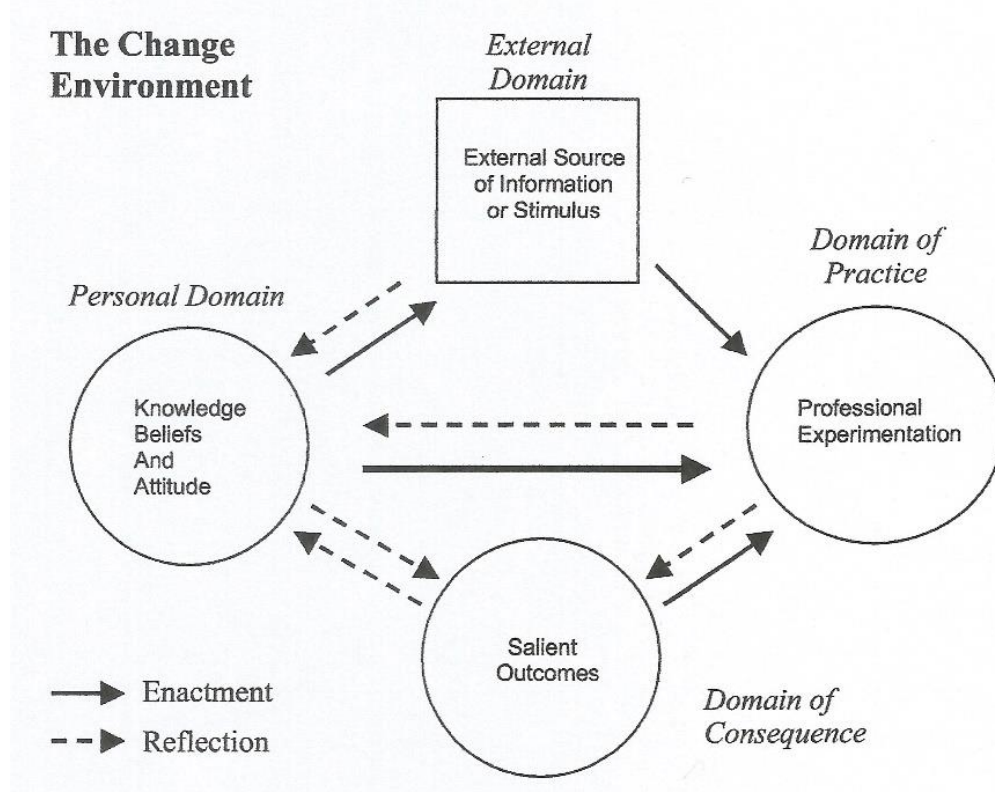


Figure 2. The Interconnected Model (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

The Interconnected Model demonstrates that teacher growth is affected by several domains (external, personal, practice, and consequence) and is a cyclical process that involves continual reflection and enactment (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002). The authors explained that a situative perspective is an appealing learning theory for the Interconnected Model because of the connection with apprenticeship; however, coaching or guided learning is not explicitly indicated on the model. With respect to the interaction among domains, the professional development framework created for this study supports the mediating forces of enactment and reflection among the external domain, personal domain, domain of practice, and domain of consequence. However, the collaborative components of coaching/peer feedback and refined practice are included in the

professional development program. As an adaptation of the Interconnected Model, the additional domain of social collaboration was incorporated to indicate the recursive flow between feedback and refined practice/experimentation; therefore, the mediating forces also include feedback and collaboration. This represents a cycle within a cycle when superimposed on the Interconnected Model (see Figure 3). The adapted model more closely reflects the theoretical perspectives of social constructivist learning theory.

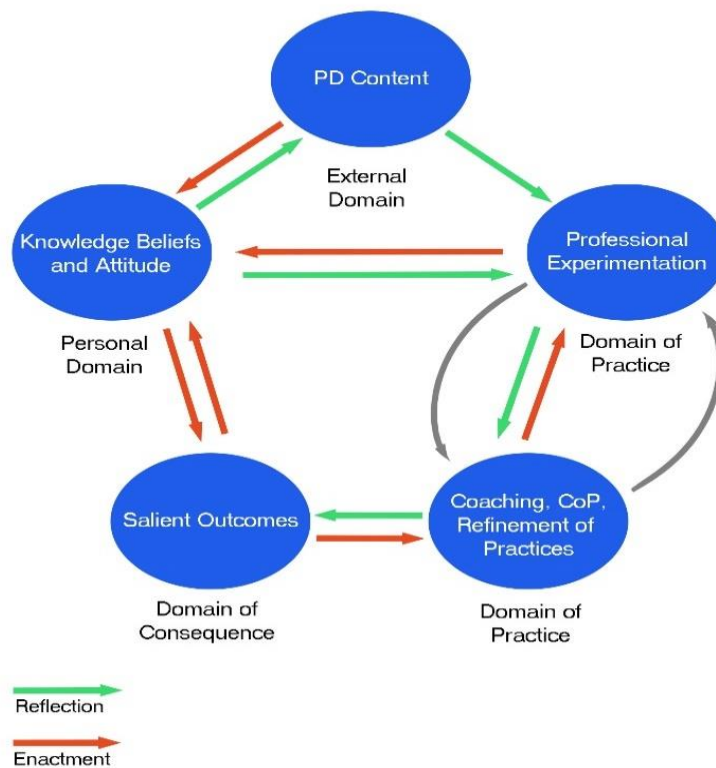


Figure 3. Adaptation.



As a situative practice, coaching supports learning in the context of instruction in the classroom. In a 1995 study on teacher learning, Englert and Tarrant found that teachers needed ongoing support from a knowledgeable other through study-group discussions as they enacted new practices to create a common vision. However, the authors cautioned that the goals and choice of the teachers are an important component (Englert & Tarrant, 1995).

### Building the Framework

The framework for the professional development program was created from effective components identified in the literature. The literature on professional development reveals the conditions that support teacher growth and reveals which past practices have failed. For example, the model of one-shot professional development where teachers receive training on a specific topic in one sitting with no follow-up has been a failure (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Kennedy, 1998). Additionally, training models where change is mandated from outside the school and where someone from the outside decides on instructional models are often ineffective for long-term change (Richardson, 1998). When these training models are short-term with limited follow-up activities, they have a chance of success only with teachers who have beliefs that match the intrinsic suppositions in the training model. Even then, these teachers may not attempt the innovations, and the estimation of implementation is about 15% (Meyer, 1988).

Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) conducted a national survey by using a probability sample of over 1,000 teachers on effective professional development practices. The authors combined the survey results with a review of the literature and

created a list of six factors that produce effective professional development. The most effective models: had an extended duration of training; had collective participation of teachers from the same grade, department, or subject; focused on specific content, rather than general teaching techniques; provided active learning opportunities; and supported continued dialogue among teachers, with an alignment of standards and assessments.

A seminal review on the impact of science and mathematics professional development on student achievement was conducted by Kennedy (1998). The findings indicated that most studies focused on organizational components such as contact hours or coaching, and not on content. However, for the studies that included content, a strong case was made for professional development that focused on teacher knowledge of the content and how students learn the subject (Kennedy, 1998).

One of the largest reviews of research on the effect of teacher participation in professional development on student achievement was conducted by the Regional Education Laboratory (Yoon et al., 2007). Findings from over 1,300 studies on professional development and student achievement were analyzed, but unfortunately, only 9 studies out of the 1,300 reviewed met the established evidence standards. This comprehensive synthesis found that programs with a positive impact on student learning were research-based, involved active learning, delivered at least 30 hours of professional development, and included content that was adaptable to specific classroom situations (Yoon et al., 2007).

Richardson (1998) explained that a large body of research identified components of effective training models and summarized the components.

- The training should be context-specific and school-wide

- Building administrators should be supportive of the process
- The training should be long term, with appropriate support and follow-up activities
- The process should encourage collaboration
- The content should be based on current information from well-designed research
- The process should include funding for materials, speakers, and peer observation.

Bean and Dagen (2012) echoed the importance of developing a culture of collaboration and listed other factors to consider in a staff development plan, such as implementing distributed or collective leadership and including between 30-100 professional development hours in the plan. The authors explained that collective leadership occurs when others have a voice in making school decisions (2012).

A six-year study of 180 schools across nine states was conducted on various types of leadership on student learning (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Findings indicated that school leadership was second only to classroom instruction in the impact on student learning (Louis et al., 2010). Student achievement was connected to collective leadership in the school and supported by a principal who was an instructional leader that established conditions to promote effective instruction. The authors explained that principals cannot be expected to possess the knowledge to be an instructional leader in all content areas, but they can support collective leadership among the teachers (Louis et al., 2010). Distributed or collective leadership can support the success of a professional development program.

Implementing effective, research-based practices in a professional development program is vital for success and sustainability. One large study identified several effective practices. A national sample of over 1,000 teachers was conducted to measure self-reported gains in skills, knowledge, and change in practice from professional development (Garet et al., 2001). The results indicated that effective practices include sustained and intense training, a focus on academic content, active learning opportunities, and learning that was integrated into the work day (Garet et al., 2001). Collective participation in the same school, grade, or subject was also perceived to be an effective practice (Garet et al., 2001).

#### Sustainability

Several measures were taken to create a sustainable program that would continue to flourish and generate professional dialogue after the program was finished. The first measure was to provide all the seminar materials needed for the teacher participants so that fiscal concerns did not inhibit their ability to continue learning. Second, during the seminar, the teachers and I identified local resources that could be utilized to provide future materials. Third, a community of practice was established so that the teachers had a structure in place to support professional experimentation, collaboration, and feedback. Finally, the fourth measure was to include the building administrator in all stages of this project so that he or she was aware of the goals, contributes to the professional dialogue, and supports the community of practice.

The authors of a study published on sustainable education initiatives on one of the bay islands in Honduras explain that “Following the literature, one of the key factors in promoting sustainability is to find local people that can take over the organization. Our

best chance of making the educational programs sustainable appeared to be to have management taken over by local islanders” (Raven, Randolph, & Heil, 2010, p. 34). Establishing CoPs enables the teachers to manage their own professional growth opportunities. The building administrators were encouraged to support the CoP.

The sustainability component of this research project is an important piece of the picture that qualitative data helped to paint. While the literature describes many effective practices for creating a sustainable program, research was needed to determine how those practices are best applied in a structure that exists in a developing country.

After a period of absence from the research location, I will return and observe how or if the teacher teams continued the communities of practice. This will lay the groundwork for possible future observation beyond the time limitations of the current study.

The professional development framework developed for this study incorporates many of the effective components for professional development (see Table 1). The term framework refers to the structure on which the professional development program was built.

Table 1

*Alignment of Effective Components*

Effective Components (Richardson, 1998; Bean & Dagen, 2012; Garet et al., 2001)	Professional Development Framework
<p>The training should be context-specific and school-wide.</p> <p>Coherence.</p>	<p>The content is developed around specific needs and delivered in specific contexts; initially the training is grade specific, but can be adapted to a school-wide program. The training will be on one content subject and aligned with local standards.</p>
<p>Building administrators should be supportive of the process.</p> <p>Distributed/collective leadership.</p>	<p>Building administrators are included in the process from the very beginning and invited to all the seminar sessions</p> <p>An instructional leader will be identified among the teacher participants; principals are encouraged to participate in the seminar so that he or she can support the instructional leader.</p>
<p>The training should be long term, with appropriate support and follow-up activities; 30-100 hours.</p>	<p>The initial seminar is a week, with follow-up support for two weeks after. Follow-up activities will continue for two months, with online support available the remainder of the school year.</p> <p>The program provides 25 hours of content and support over a 2-month period. The remaining five hours of professional development will occur via online support of the community of practice over the course of the school year.</p>
<p>The process should encourage collaboration.</p>	<p>Collaboration begins with the initial seminar as teachers are encouraged to construct meaning collaboratively and continues with team meetings and establishing a community of practice.</p> <p>Collaboration between the principal and the participating teachers regarding the content of the seminar is encouraged.</p>
<p>The content should be based on current information from well-designed research.</p>	<p>Both the framework for professional development and the literacy content are based on well-designed research.</p>
<p>The process should include funding for materials, speakers, and peer observation.</p>	<p>Funding for materials, substitute teachers, speakers, and peer observation are provided.</p>

### Enhancing the Framework

The framework for the professional development program was based on effective practices identified in the literature and provides the foundational strands for the program that I developed. The seven foundational pieces are augmented with several practices supported by the social constructivist perspective, such as communities of practice, reflective practice, and cognitive apprenticeship. To strengthen the program, additional threads were included, such as the consideration of teacher beliefs and the dynamics of RASPPA from the CLE theory of change (see Table 2). When these components are woven together, a strong, rich fabric of effective practices for teacher learning is the result.

Table 2

*Enhanced Components*

Program Component	Method of Incorporation
Teacher beliefs	Survey; interview
Reflective practices	Weekly teacher reflections; discussions
Relationships	Focus on relationships with participants
Assets	Teachers self-identify strengths, materials, goals, and needs (survey and interview); building administrator identifies strengths of staff and school community; resources in broader community (interview); social relationships (communities of practice) and social networks supported
Stories	Participants share their story in the group and interview
Place	Discussion of strengths, assets, histories, and stories of each school and in survey
Politic	Ongoing dialogue
Action	Implementing new strategies and seeking support from the community.
Situated learning as communities of practice and coaching	Classroom observations and feedback; coaching; peer observations

## Reflective Practice

Reflection and collaboration are essential pieces of the professional development program. Richardson (1998) explained that reflection and change are “on-going processes of assessing beliefs, goals, and results” (p. 6). Reflective practice encourages teachers to reexamine teaching practices and supports the construction of meaning (Schön, 1987). A



critical first-step for improving teaching practices is reflection (Collett, 2011). Reflection enables teachers to become aware of challenging areas, assess effectiveness, and to move forward with an informed plan. Professional development is effective when teachers are supported with opportunities to reflect on and discuss their students' learning (Franke, Carpenter, Levi, & Fennema, 2001; Whitcomb et al., 2009). Franke and her colleagues (2001) studied 22 teachers after they participated in a professional development course. They investigated whether the learning was sustained after four years. They found that talking about student learning with their colleagues was not simply an exercise in sharing, but it was building a knowledge base on which to base instructional decisions. The most effective programs position teachers as active learners who shape their professional growth through reflective practice of professional development participation and in practical application (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002).

Reflective practice is a significant component of teacher growth; however, support may not be available at every school site. Technology can offer a solution through virtual discussion. A study of 25 pre-service teachers found that online dialogue regarding teacher reflections can be scaffolded to provide focus (Bean & Stevens, 2002). The instructor posed prompts and called attention to thoughtful responses. Online communication can play an important part in supporting a professional development program and encouraging reflective practice--providing resources and opportunities to staff who would not otherwise have access to coaching support.

#### Developing an Effective Plan

Many factors must be taken into consideration to develop an effective professional development program that incorporates the best models of learning, existing

teacher beliefs and practices, social constructivist perspectives, and best practices in literacy instruction. Woven among each of these components is an awareness of the cultural context and the presence of a critical theory mentality to intentionally establish procedures and processes which empower, rather than marginalize. Theory and research on effective practices and teacher beliefs have been synthesized to create a professional development program (Bean & Dagen, 2012; Birman et al., 2000; Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Clay, 2001, 2005; Garet et al., 2001; Pajares, 1992; Putnam & Borko, 2000; Richardson, 1998; Shulman, 2004; Tillema, 1994; Yoon et al., 2007). Incorporating a change in practice requires more than a few outsiders working with teachers; it requires time and space for reflection, encouraging environments and student outcomes, and the opportunity to participate in a community of learners (Shulman, 2004). Effective professional development includes many components and “is reflective of teachers’ beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences” (Richardson et al., 1991, pp. 153-154).

The professional development program I developed was carefully constructed by reviewing research-based best practices for teacher learning, reflecting on personal experience as a teacher learner, and considering the strengths, goals, practices, and beliefs of the participants. For this project, the term ‘professional development program’ refers to all components including the seminar, observations, teacher implementation, and feedback. The program was created as a sustainable, cost-effective, learner-centered experience. The basic framework of the program was based on the Interconnected Model (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002), with adaptations that included a recursive loop for collaboration and feedback (see Figure 3). This recursive loop supports the Vygotskian concept of learning first at the social level (Social Collaboration Domain), and then

learning at the individual level by refining practice and applying it to the Professional Practice Domain.

The structure for implementation was based on the Summer Math For Teachers program described by Putnam and Borko (2000) which consists of an initial intensive training period, creating lessons that incorporate the new learning, opportunities for reflection and ongoing feedback, and workshops after the initial training. Designing learning experiences for teachers that are situated outside of the classroom can be crucial for powerful learning because “various settings for teachers’ learning give rise to different kinds of knowing” (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 6). Learning in a space outside of the classroom may have the additional benefit of helping the teachers think of the content in new ways (Putnam & Borko, 2000). Enacting new practices may be challenging in the context and culture of the current classroom. Putnam and Borko (2000) claimed that a program which employs multiple contexts of learning, such as workshops and ongoing support, offers a promising model for teacher learning. This structure was chosen for several reasons. One reason is that the multiple contexts of learning give teachers the opportunity for “different kinds of knowing” (Putnam & Borko, 2000, p. 6). The intense initial training was appealing because teachers value intense training, and it successfully worked with the schedule and timeline for the research project (Bean & Dagen, 2012). Other positive aspects of this structure are creating lessons that incorporate new learning and opportunities for reflection and feedback. Furthermore, the structure was flexible enough to support the integration of components from the first research question, an asset-driven model and self-selected content, and to support the purpose of my second research question. The collaborative process of creating lessons and opportunities for

reflection and feedback helped with the process of attaining a balance among teacher beliefs and current practices, self-selected content, and known best practices.

Collaboration and reflection can reveal the thoughts, intentions, and feelings of the participants, which supported my efforts in attaining a balance among the previously mentioned components. Moreover, it can provide transparency to an otherwise opaque process of reconciling beliefs and current practices with new practices.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the literature on teacher beliefs, literacy processing theory and best practices in literacy, and teacher professional growth and discussed theoretical perspectives. A large body of research addresses teacher beliefs, with much of the work published from the 1970s to the mid-1990s. The impact of teacher beliefs on instructional decisions is clearly supported by a wide range of research agendas (Kagan, 1992) and methodological approaches. However, very little literature is available regarding the identification of teacher beliefs *before* and in consideration of the development of professional development programs. What is not known is how to best reconcile differences in beliefs and professional development content. Tillema (1994) is one of the few researchers to measure teacher beliefs before the delivery of professional development, and the findings indicated that less learning took place when greater differences between professional development content and teacher beliefs were observed. Tillema also proposed that the gain in knowledge is not the ultimate evaluation of change in concept; rather, it is the amount of change between the pre-existing beliefs between teachers and professional development content that impacts the acceptance of new information. However, since the focus of the research was on proving or disproving the

congruence hypothesis, the author did not detail how to explicitly adapt the professional development to better align with beliefs. While Tillema's (1994) research provided valuable data and insight for this research project, more information is needed regarding the process of adapting professional development content or negotiating a change in teacher beliefs. Hollingsworth (1989) looked at preservice teachers' beliefs before a training program, but tracked the cognitive changes and identity maintenance of the participants, not the reconciliation of training content to beliefs. The implications for research are that teacher beliefs are an important construct to study and understand and that more information is needed on the relationship between pre-existing teacher beliefs and the creation of professional development content.

Teacher professional development is a topic which has been researched for decades with various methodologies. However, there is not always a fluid exchange of information between academic researchers and educational practitioners. Though currently relevant, this is not a new problem. Dewey identified this challenge over 100 years ago (Dewey, 1904). Korthagen (2007) explained that "the gap between research and practice is most of all a gap between professional cultures and that there is a strong need for researchers and practitioners to build joint communities, bringing together both a research and a practical focus" (p. 304). This research project does exactly what Korthagen suggested. Research and practitioners joined together to collaborate on a practical focus, which speaks directly to the second research question.

Moreover, we have much to learn about precisely how teachers learn, what they learn, and specific links to student achievement (Borko, 2004). Phase 1 studies, where a professional development program is researched at a single site, have provided evidence

that intensive programs can impact instructional practices and increase teacher knowledge as well as evidence that professional learning communities can support teacher learning (Borko, 2004). These studies can provide valuable multifocal lens to observe and gather near-vision data regarding individual teacher learning and distance-vision data regarding learning in a professional community (Borko, 2004). There is also a need for Phase 1 studies that can connect researchers with professional development staff (Borko, 2004).

Major works in professional development effectiveness include that of Kennedy (1998) and Yoon et al., (2007). Yoon and colleagues found positive results with professional development programs that were research-based, involved active learning and at least 30 hours of professional development, and coaching (2007). Kennedy's comprehensive review found positive results were achieved with programs that focused on the teacher's content knowledge and how students learn that specific subject (1998). The abundant literature provides information regarding components that can be incorporated in effective professional development programs. Additionally, the literature provides indications of future research on topics such as how and what teachers learn and the relationship between pre-existing beliefs and professional development content.

The theoretical perspective of social constructivism and how it was threaded throughout the research project in the development of the program was discussed. The teacher participants had the opportunity to construct knowledge through situated experiences, cognitive apprenticeship, and social interactions. These experiences align with the inquiry from the second research question by integrating interaction, observation, and feedback to shed light on the process. This project is also framed with a

critical theory perspective in honoring the experiences, knowledge, and strengths that the teachers bring to the training program.

After careful review of the literature and reflection of my own experiences as a teacher attending professional development presentations, I have created an asset-driven framework that incorporates (a) self-identified needs and goals; (b) active, collaborative and situated learning experiences; and (c) reflective practices in a sustainable model. The professional development model in this study included an intensive five-day presentation of content, followed by classroom visits, peer discussions and observations, additional content, and continual feedback. Support systems were established by means of including the building administrator in the process and establishing a community of practice. Creating a support system enhanced the sustainability of the program. Each participant constructed their own meaning by weaving his or her experiences and knowledge together to form a pattern in a unique tapestry of learning.

This study contributed to the understanding of the relationship between teacher beliefs, current practice, and professional development programs and provides information on specific aspects of the relationship for possibly future study. Moreover, this study provides data from a setting in a developing country.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

Yin (2003) explained that three conditions exist that determine the type of research methods used: “(a) the type of research question posed, (b) the extent of control a researcher has over actual behavioral events, and (c) the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to entirely historical events” (p. 9). Research questions consisting of “how,” “why,” or “what” questions that are exploratory in nature are appropriate for case study (Yin, 2003). Other conditions of my research project that align with case study methodology are the focus on contemporary events and having no control over behavioral events. Case study allows researchers to “retain a . . . real-world perspective” and understand “complex social phenomena” (Yin, 2003, p. 4). My research questions were designed to help understand the complex social phenomena of teacher practices and implementing new instructional practices. An in-depth study of a bounded system is better suited to understand complex social phenomena, rather than a large-scale statistical research project.

#### Selection of the Case

A case study involves identifying “a bounded system . . . to be investigated” (Merriam, 2009, p. 81). Stake (1995) explained that a case is bounded by time and place. A contemporary bounded system, or case, was the best fit for my research questions because my inquiry involved exploring a case “over time, through detailed, in-depth data



collection involving multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97). A bounded system could better address the topic of the research questions than a broad statistical study. The first question addressed a process for an asset-driven model and self-selected content. The professional development program was designed with the idea of creating customized content in response to self-identified needs of the teachers. A case study approach gives voice to the needs of the teachers and provides the opportunity to achieve an in-depth understanding of how teachers function in this setting.

A case study often employs two levels of purposeful sampling: selection of the case and selection of the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The selection of the case began with a broad concept of selecting an educational institution in a developing country. The participants were selected once the location of the case was identified.

The bounded system of investigation consists of the six teacher participants (1st-3rd grade) who were chosen from the 10 public and private schools in Honduras. All 10 of the schools fell under the jurisdiction of the school board.

Honduras was chosen after a lengthy process of considering many locations in various countries for the research project. Initially, I reached out to professional and personal contacts via social media for connections to international school sights. This resulted in many leads to secondary sources. As I followed up on potential locations, I began to create a list of criteria for the location. The criteria established for selecting a case were as follows: (a) a developing region with limited resources for teacher professional development; (b) an ample number of available primary teachers; (c) classrooms where instruction was delivered to a group of students in a central location; (d) instruction in a language for which translators are readily available; (e) a formal,

established education system; and (f) a supportive administration. These criteria were developed to align with the research questions and my vision of the project. Several of the criteria evolved during the process of securing a sight for the research. The first criterion (a developing region with limited resources) was established to align with the first research question regarding professional development in a developing country. The second criterion, an ample number of available primary teachers, was important for the social constructivist aspect of the program. The next three criteria evolved during the process of securing a sight. I toured one school at a prospective sight and observed the students working in individual cubicles. The students worked independently through packets to progress to the next level. Adults were available to help individual students and answer questions, but there was no whole-group or small-group instruction. This visit prompted the requirement of having a classroom where instruction was delivered to a group of students. Practical and financial concerns were the main reasons for including a language/translation component and a formal, established school system requirement in the list of criteria. One potential sight, for example, was in a country with over 300 languages and dialects. I was advised that locating a translator who was fluent in English as well as the national and regional languages was a difficult task. During the process of searching for a location, it became apparent that a formal, established school system would provide a structure for communication and processing of required consent forms. The last criterion, which addresses administrative support, was established both as a practical concern for gaining access to a school and from the research in the literature review regarding the importance of administrative support. Although not a requirement, I strongly preferred a location where I had a personal contact who was well-connected and

embedded in the community. I learned from past experiences in Kenya, India, and Romania that a local contact is an asset. The last requirement involved travel considerations. I needed a location that was served by major commercial U.S. airlines. After considering several locations, the location in Honduras best fit the criteria. I had a well-connected local contact and available translators, and the location had an international airport served by several major airlines.

### Demographics

Demographically, the Honduran population is comprised of 90% Mestizo, 7% Amerindian, 2% Black, and 1% White (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). The Roman Catholic faith accounts for 97% of the population, while Protestants make up 3% (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). Spanish is the official language, and there are many Amerindian dialects spoken. Honduras is one of the poorest countries in Central America, with the highest poverty rates being among rural and indigenous people, and holds the unfortunate distinction of being the murder capital of the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016). According to the CIA, economic challenges are compounded by the consistently low quality of education with little teacher or school accountability (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016)).

### Education in Honduras

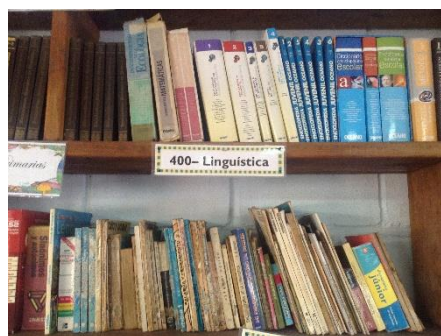
The public-school system in Honduras was established in the late 1950s and early 1960s. However, it was not until 1982 that education became a right protected by the constitution (Gress & Ruchti, 2012). Prior to the 1960s, formal education was an exclusive privilege for those who could afford private tuition. In the ensuing decades, Honduras has struggled to provide a quality education consistently. Plagued with

economic, political, and social difficulties, the country consistently ranks low on educational benchmarks. For example, Honduras is ranked in the 68<sup>th</sup> percentile in access to education and the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile in learning (Education Policy Data Center).

### Seminar Environment

The professional development seminar took place in a public-school library (see Figure 3). Like the other public-schools on the island, it was a cement block building built around an interior courtyard. Three of the teacher participants worked at the school where the library was located. The room had electric power available, several rectangular tables, chairs, and a chalkboard. High windows lined the outer wall and the opposite wall contained several windows that looked out onto the open-air hallway and beyond to the courtyard. The back wall was lined with books for the school; however, the space did not appear to be used as a library for students to check out books. It appeared to be a storage area for surplus textbooks and reference books. The library seemed to have not changed in decades. An ethnography from 1988 described the library as follows:

The library at first glance seems adequate. A closer look, however, reveals that there is only one shelf of Spanish books, appropriate for grades 1-6. Many of them are old, tattered, and torn. There are other old texts and books in both Spanish and English that don't appear to have been used; most of them are more appropriate for teachers or advanced readers. (Olsen, 2006, p.94)



*Figure 3. School Library*

## School Environments

The teacher participants were from two schools which are on the same side of the island. School 1 serves approximately 600 students K-8, and School 2 serves approximately 500 students K-8. Most of the classrooms were not air-conditioned on either campus. Each school has a courtyard in the middle where students gather for recess and a morning snack.

School 1 was where the seminar occurred and is located directly off the main road in a busy area in the community (see Figure 4). There is a narrow shoulder between the road and the school entrance. The entrance is secured with bars which are unlocked and pushed to the side during school hours. A large hallway leads from the entrance into a courtyard where the students have a morning snack and recess. The school is a two-story concrete block structure with wooden stairs. The classrooms have open windows and are colorfully decorated. This school was the first public school built on the island (Olsen, 2006). The school has not changed much in several decades. A description of the school from a researcher in 1988:

The school is located on [the town's] main street. It is a two-story cement block building that abuts the sidewalk. Four classrooms have windows opening onto the main street. A large iron gate in the front is closed and locked during school hours. ... The school has eleven classrooms, a library, a director's office, one other office, and a resource room that opened in 1988 with help from Peace Corps Volunteers. There is also a bathroom on the bottom floor; the Director was apologetic as she lent me the key to enter it. I found it had minimal sanitation and require a severe need and weak sense of smell to enter. (Olsen, 2006, p. 94)



*Figure 4. School 1*

School 2 is located along the same main road in an area with less traffic (see Figure 5). This school also has bars which are unlocked and pushed aside during school hours. The director's office is immediately to the right. A small hallway leads to the courtyard and classrooms. The two stories are colorfully painted. Concrete stairs lead to the second story and a set of wooden bathroom stalls.



*Figure 5.* School 2

### Participant Selection

In qualitative case studies, two levels of sampling are often necessary (Merriam, 2009). The first level is the selection of the case and the second level is sampling within the case (Merriam, 2009). For the teacher participants in this case, the nonprobability sampling strategy of purposive sampling was used to select teachers who taught in the primary grades.

A second consideration for the sampling procedure was the need for teachers to establish a community of practice. Therefore, teacher participants would need to work within proximity of one another. Consequently, the samples were chosen at the school level within the school staff of K-3 teachers.

The participants in this study were selected from 10 public and private schools in a small district in Honduras. While all teachers were invited to attend the professional development seminar sessions, only six teachers were selected to participate in the seminar, surveys, and coaching. The number of participants selected was constrained by budgetary concerns and the amount of time available to coach individual participants.

A list of possible teacher participants was sent to me via email from a school director. I attempted to ascertain how these specific teachers were chosen to be placed on the list. I was told by my contact that the directors (principals) chose the teachers for the list, but I was not able to ascertain whether the principals chose the teachers because they felt the teachers needed extra support or because they were considered stellar teachers and would do well with the professional development program.

In an attempt to clarify the selection process, I wrote one of the principals and asked how the participants were selected. The response indicated that teachers were chosen on the criteria of responsibility, dedication, commitment, academic preparation, and willingness to share information and to enact the new techniques.

In an interview, one of the teachers from another school told me that the principal sent other teachers to her so that they could learn her method of teaching children to read. Another teacher from the same school stated that the director brought visitors to observe her classroom because she was considered a model teacher. It appears that the principals chose teachers who they thought would be successful.

### Participant Profiles

Participant profiles were compiled from survey, observational, and interview data. Each participant profile is presented here.

Ruth. Ruth comes from a legacy of educators and has been teaching for almost 30 years. She has taught grades 1-3, and in the new school year, will teach grade 4. Her colleagues appreciate that she is a very helpful person, fun, collaborative, dynamic, and attentive. I would also add that she is friendly, adventurous, and open to trying new



things. At my invitation, she traveled from Honduras to the United States for the first time to attend a literacy conference.

Ruth states that her biggest challenges are that the parents do not teach their children at home and that there is no support from some parents. The top areas in which she would like instructional support are phonics and reading fluency.

On a visit to her classroom after the seminar, I was delighted by a Reader's Theater performance. Although this was a new activity for the class, they all performed well. The students appeared to be very engaged and excited to perform. This was a day of "fiesta" and celebration for the school. Ruth's room was decorated with streamers and balloons, and there were treats and drinks on a table. The Reader's Theater activity seemed to be a good choice for the students on such a busy and distracting day.

Amelia. Amelia always wanted to be a teacher. She began helping with Sunday school at a young age and had her own Sunday school class by the time she turned 11. Now a licensed veteran of almost 20 years, she is challenged by her work and writes that she reflects on how she should do her job. She has received training on inclusionary practices for special needs children. Currently, she teaches in the primary grades and has 36 students in her class. She feels that her strongest areas of teaching are reading and writing (Spanish), math, and practical studies such as arts and crafts. She is interested in learning more about helping struggling readers, motivating students, and teaching comprehension strategies and phonics. She believes that her colleagues appreciate her dedication, discipline, and collaboration. One of her greatest joys in teaching is when a child learns to read from her. Some of the obstacles that cause her frustration are frequent student absences, low attendance on Saturday school, and a high number of students who

are behind and need extra support (approximately 12 out of 36). Peer tutors are used in her classroom to help with the large number of striving students.

Her short-term goals for her students are that they all learn their name, the alphabet, to form words, and to read. In the long term, she hopes they will read and write perfectly and become successful professionals. The curriculum and pace of teaching are dictated by the government-issued reading texts. About 45 minutes a day is dedicated to the lessons in the book.

I observed that students did not sit for long periods of time in perfectly lined rows in her classroom. To keep them engaged, she changes things and keeps them moving.

Amelia is an eager and motivated learner who always seems to have a smile. She hopes for more follow-up seminars to build on the initial content. She would love to build a small classroom library so that her students might have more opportunities to read.

Teresa. Teresa is an engaging person and was one of the first participants to interact with me during the seminar. She writes that her colleagues appreciate her humility and practicality and how she approaches things with excitement. She decided in ninth grade to become a teacher. A veteran of over 30 years, she knows how to teach children and shares her method with other teachers who ask or who are referred to her. In addition to her experience, she has had training in special needs and special education.

She finds that the lessons in the government-issued books do not always have the most effective lessons. However, if she chooses her own lessons to teach that are more effective, she does not do so openly. She feels that her strongest area of teaching is 1st-grade reading. Her joy from teaching comes when her kids are reading and she sees progress. She believes that she makes the most of student learning by using small groups

and using peer tutors. Her preferred method of learning is in a small group, so the social learning component is evident in her teaching and learning style.

She does not think that establishing authority is difficult and once that is established, she builds a rapport with the students. I observed that her reaction to student disturbances was swift, stern, and could include physical reprimands. When she talks about her students or teaching, it is obvious that she loves what she does. She describes herself as an agent of change in society.

Carol. Carol is a soft-spoken and impeccably dressed veteran teacher with over 20 years of experience teaching grades 1, 2, 3, and 6. She has training on how to help students with special needs. Her colleagues appreciate her humility, dedication to work, and punctuality and how organized she tries to be.

She says the most beautiful thing is when the first-graders all learn to read, and she appreciates the affection of the children. Her greatest challenges are when students have problems learning or cannot speak Spanish. The areas in which she would like instructional support are phonics and comprehension.

Due to her soft-spoken nature, I was expecting her classroom to be very quiet. However, it was one of the loudest classes that I visited. When trying to have a conversation, it was very difficult to hear her responses over the noise. She always remained calm, and the noise did not seem to bother her.

After the professional development sessions, I visited Carol's classroom, and she was using one of the picture books from the seminar as a read aloud, *Alexander y El Dia Terrible, Horrible, Espantoso, Horroroso* (Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day) book by Judith Viorst (2012).

Lucia. Lucia is a small, energetic teacher with several decades of experience. She has taught grades 1-5, but she taught first and second grade for 25 years. Of her preferred learning style, she states that she was an active student and learns by doing. She is creative and looks for ways to engage her students. During the seminar, she brought in books that she had made from her students' writing. Her colleagues appreciate that she is responsible, dedicated, service-oriented, and collaborative. Lucia feels that the biggest challenges she faces as a teacher are absenteeism, lack of assistance from parents, and malnutrition.

The area that she would like the most support instructionally is reading fluency and the sounds of the letters. Her goal is for all her 36 students to read, write, and gain reading comprehension. She hopes that her students will continue to read throughout their lives.

The first time that I visited Lucia's class, she was reading a play from the government book, and several students were in front of the classroom, repeating the lines and acting out the play, while the rest of the class watched from their desks. Along one wall were windows covered in black metal bars that opened to the street in front of the school. The windows provided light, the occasional breeze, and a steady supply of dust to cover the cement floor. The students seemed to enjoy this activity.

After our seminar, I visited her class again. This time she was reading a picture book with lots of animation. She had written some of the words from the book on cards and put them on the board, one at a time, after reading the story. Lucia prefers active learning and seems to find ways to make learning active for her students.

Jenny. Jenny decided when she was 15 years old to become a teacher. Her first-grade teacher had an impact on this decision. She lost her mother when she was 7 and moved to a new school where she had a very influential teacher. In her decade of teaching experience, she has taught first, second, and third grades. She currently teaches 32 first-graders. To assess students, she has them complete work on the chalkboard and takes notes on their progress.

She feels that her best areas of teaching are Spanish and math, and the qualities that her colleagues appreciate about her are being helpful, innovative, dynamic, dedicated, and creative. Jenny asked many questions and was eager to try new strategies with her students. She requested honest feedback on the implementation of the new strategies. Her classroom was orderly for having 32 first-graders, and the students seemed to respond to her directions and corrections.

After the seminar, I visited Jenny's class. She had created letters on cardstock for each of her students, and she was guiding them through a Making Words lesson. When it was over, she asked for honest feedback, and I gave her a few tips on how to simplify the lesson.

Table 3 presents a summary of the teacher participants. The summary includes their pseudonyms as well as their years of experience, current teaching assignment, and school in which they taught.

Table 3

*Summary of Teacher Participants*

Teacher Participant Pseudonyms	Years of Experience	Grade Currently Teaching	School Location
Ruth	27	3 <sup>rd</sup>	School 1
Amelia	18	2 <sup>nd</sup>	School 1
Teresa	33	1 <sup>st</sup>	School 1
Carol	23	3 <sup>rd</sup>	School 2
Lucia	30	2 <sup>nd</sup>	School 2
Jenny	10	1 <sup>st</sup>	School 2

#### Researcher's Role

During the study, my role changed. I began as an observer participant during the first week, and in the second week I was an active participant during the seminar phase as a coach. I supported teacher learning by providing feedback, supplying resources, and sharing my experiences. I was not an evaluator of the teachers at any time throughout the study. During this time, I also collected data through observations, field notes, and interviews. The observer participant and active participant roles enabled me to best address the research questions by engaging in various levels of interaction with the participants.

#### Researcher's Stance

My assumptions approaching this research project were that social constructivist perspectives can effectively support professional learning and are a more engaging

method of learning that traditional lectures. I am generally biased against professional development that is delivered via lecture as a “one shot” training. I have participated in those types of professional development events and did not experience long-term change in my teaching practices due to that type of professional development. My perspective is that collaboration among professionals can be beneficial. My experience in working with various groups and different cultures has also broadened my perspective to include the understanding that modes of effective communication can look very different from one location to another. Therefore, I do not have a single, exclusive static model of what collaboration should look like.

Most of my experience with different cultures and international travel has been from volunteering with a nonprofit Christian organization. This period of travel occurred during the time that I was completing the required coursework for my doctorate degree. Recognizing my passion for this work, my perceptive advisor suggested that I explore avenues which could connect my passion and my studies. Exploring how to create and implement a professional development program for teachers in developing countries seamlessly wove together my desire to continue to serve and my educational and professional experience.

### Challenges

Planning for a study in a foreign country involves many challenges; many of which I anticipated, such as finding a safe place to live, arranging for transportation, translating documents, and packing all research material, clothes, and necessities for a month into two suitcases. Shipping charges to this location were obscenely expensive (\$110 for 10 pounds was the discounted rate), and the island had limited options for

purchasing goods. However, there were a few issues that I did not anticipate.

Communicating with school personnel and scheduling times to meet was challenging.

There were no official school district emails or telephones.

Scheduling was a challenge due to unexpected school holidays and communication challenges. Slowly, I began to understand that everything happened at a different pace on the island. An experience with a taxi driver helped to illustrate how time was viewed differently. I was in a taxi on my way to an appointment when I noticed the clock on the dashboard displayed a much later time than I was expecting to see. I asked the driver if it was the correct time, and he replied in the affirmative and then looked to the back seat to confirm with another passenger. The passenger confirmed that it was correct. In a panic, I retrieved my phone and realized that the clock in the taxi was almost 30 minutes fast. The taxi driver had no idea that his clock was incorrect and seemed completely unconcerned when I told him the clock was wrong. My anxiety over the clock display was wasted energy and I would need to learn a new set of rules regarding time.

One author explained that on the tropical island “a certain sluggishness of mind and movement is dictated by the elements” (Yuscarán, 1991). During the summer months, the sweltering heat and humidity are like an oppressive wet blanket that eventually smothers all manic tendencies or urgent “time is money” perspectives. I found that I had to alter my work habits and allow more time to complete a task. Concentrating for extended periods proved to be challenging in the unrelenting heat and the continual assault from biting insects.



## Data Collection

For this qualitative case study, the primary sources of data collection were interviews, observational field notes, and surveys (see Table 4). This qualitative approach involves multiple sources of data (Creswell, 2013). A pilot study was conducted on the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey before formal data collection began.

Table 4

### *Data Collection*

Primary Data Sources	Date Collected
Observational Field Notes	June 2016-March 2017
WhatsApp & Facebook Messenger	October 11, 2016-present
Assets & Needs Assessment Survey	July 25, 2016
Initial Interview	October 3-10, 2016
First Teacher Belief Survey	October 4, 2016
Second Teacher Belief Survey	November 2, 2016
Third Teacher Belief Survey	Cancelled
professional development Feedback	October 12, 2016
Teacher Reflections	Poor response
Post Classroom Visit Interviews	Varied
End of Program Interview	November 2 <sup>nd</sup>
Email Communications	None
CoP Evaluation	None
Final Interviews	March 9 <sup>th</sup> & 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2017

## Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted with teachers from Belize on the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The pilot study participants consisted of teachers from four schools (three religious schools and one government school) in Belize. The teachers had an ongoing relationship with an elementary school in Parker, Colorado, and were participating in an ethnographic study under IRB governance from Colorado State University. The survey was sent to the teachers via email. Belize shares economic, geographical, and cultural similarities with Honduras (in fact, it was previously British Honduras); therefore, a pilot study with this group of teachers was a valuable tool in refining the survey. The data from the pilot study were not included in the findings of the research project in the fall 2016. Aggregated data were available to any of the teacher participants in the pilot study.

Surveys were emailed to six educators in Belize. Participants were offered a chance to win a \$25 gift certificate in a drawing. From the six sent out, three completed surveys were received. After reviewing the answers from the completed surveys from Belize, I eliminated one question that I felt did not yield any relevant information. Question 14 (Question 13 on the revised copy) was revised so that the number of answer options was reduced. The options removed were determined by the lack of responses from the surveys. Other revisions included the removal of a question that was repeated and a revision in the instructions, changing the estimated completion time from 10-15 minutes to 15-20 minutes. After I refined the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, I submitted a change-of-protocol request to the IRB and received approval before administering it to the teachers in Honduras.

## Data Collection Tools

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were important for this project because questions were created to target specific data needs. The semi-structured format allowed for follow-up questions and the opportunity to pursue a line of inquiry related to the topic. The flexibility of this format was essential in gathering data regarding the complex process of creating a professional development program. The way in which a participant answers a question may lead to additional questions which can reveal relevant details or important information that did not occur to the researcher to ask. Seidman (2013) stated, “The interviewer must maintain a delicate balance between providing enough openness for the participants to tell their stories and enough focus to allow the interview structure to work” (p. 670). The semi-structured format allows for such openness and, as the name implies, provides interview structure.

The initial interview with the teacher participants enabled me to gather data regarding teaching practices, beliefs, and past experiences. The interview questions were derived from Collet’s (2011) initial interview questions and Luft and Roehrig’s (2007) study on teacher beliefs and technology integration. The authors stated that interviews provide an excellent source of data on teacher beliefs because the “process allows the teacher to reveal the complexity of the belief system” (p. 49) and surpasses the inadequacies of the written assessment. Therefore, the interview format was needed to address the belief component of the second research question. Seven questions from the Luft and Roehrig (2007) Teacher Beliefs Interview regarding knowledge and learning were included in the initial teacher interview.

These interviews were conducted during the week of the seminar and took place in the same room, which was the school library. Two interviews were scheduled each day during the breaks. Each interview was recorded, translated at the time of the interview, and reviewed by the participant for a member check. The translator asked the questions from a list that I provided. I wrote down the answers to the questions as the teacher participants responded and then checked my responses for accuracy as the translator interpreted their responses.

The interviews at the end of the program were conducted in the classrooms of each teacher with a translator present. These interviews were more difficult because the classrooms were often noisy and the teachers were pressed for time. This made it difficult to ask follow-up questions. However, the interviews tended to yield more information than any of the written responses, such as surveys or teacher reflections. These interviews provided information regarding the implementation of practices from the perspective of the teacher participants. This perspective from the teachers, along with my classroom observations, created a much clearer picture of their understanding regarding new practices than observations alone.

Follow-up interviews five months after the program ended were conducted with four of the participants. I could develop more targeted questions due to my experience at the research locations and initial review of the data collected. The data from the interviews helped to answer lingering questions and clarify answers from previous surveys or interviews. Semi-structured interviews, with a translator present, were the best method to gather accurate, specific information in a short period of time. In contrast to a written survey, I could immediately redirect or ask clarifying questions if the participant

seemed confused or gave an off-topic answer. Additionally, I had the opportunity to encourage the participants to “tell me more” when a question yielded an interesting or unexpected answer.

All of the interviews were recorded, with the exception of two initial interviews due to technological issues. A translator was present to ask the questions, listen for the response, and immediately translate the response for me. Consequently, transcription of the interviews involved transcribing the words of the translator, not the participants’ actual words. Fortunately, I was able to understand much of the participant responses and, on several occasions, I asked for clarification when I heard a word or phrase from the participant that was not included in the translator’s response. However, transcription of the participants’ actual words was preferred, and meaning may have been lost in the process of translation.

Observations. Observations were an integral part of the data collection plan and served dual purposes in this study. Teaching practices and organization of instruction were observed for the first week before the seminar began to ascertain compatibility with the evolving professional development program. Observations were a vital tool for addressing the first research question regarding the creation of a professional development program. Surveys were also used for this purpose, but observations provided a more detailed picture of the educational environment and teaching practices of the teacher participants. I visited each classroom and observed each teacher for approximately 20-30 minutes. Fieldnotes were taken during each visit and included observer comments and quotations and were highly descriptive (Merriam, 2009). The

observational protocol format used included time and length of observation, present participants, descriptive notes, and reflective notes (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Additionally, observations were used to gather data regarding the implementation of the professional development, feedback from the participants, and the application of new practices. Notes were recorded after each seminar session and during classroom visits to observe the teacher participants implementing new practices.

Surveys. Surveys were included as an initial data collection tool to inform the creation of the professional development program and to record teacher beliefs and current practices regarding literacy. The surveys administered addressed components in both research questions. I created The Assets and Needs Assessment Survey to collect initial data so that I could begin creating a professional development program. I chose this tool because it could be thoughtfully prepared and translated ahead of time and administered to the whole group simultaneously. This required much less time than an interview, and a professional translator was not needed.

The second survey, The TBPS, was created to record the beliefs of the teachers as they pertained to literacy instruction. A survey was used to record this information because this was the primary data collection tool used in the literature regarding teacher beliefs.

Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The purpose of this survey was to collect information regarding the teacher participants' current practices in literacy, past experience and training, available materials, and self-identified goals. This information was used to develop a professional development program customized to their needs. The exact purpose of the survey, the population, and the available resources were considered

in the design (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Additional considerations were involved in the planning, such as problem definition, design of measurements, and concern for participants (Cohen et al., 2011). These considerations were revisited after the pilot study, and revisions were made to the instrument. For example, reviewing the problem definition enabled me to delete one question that did not address the problem or purpose of the survey.

The survey contains 22 questions: five questions ask for general information about the participant, such as experience and current teaching grade; three questions ask about their strengths and what they enjoy about teaching; eight questions are open-ended and ask about teaching schedule, available materials, available support, and challenges; two questions ask about specific literacy content; two questions ask about goals; and two questions ask for comments.

Questions regarding the teacher's strengths and what he or she enjoyed about teaching are on the survey to provide an opportunity to create a program that builds on their strengths and to incorporate those aspects of teaching that bring joy. Specific literacy content questions were provided to give ideas about practices for those teachers who may not have the jargon or labels for concepts to answer an open-ended question. One of the last items on the survey asked the participant to write a question for the presenter. No parameters were specified as to the topic of the question. The purpose of the last item was to create the expectation that participants had questions to minimize any hesitancy in asking questions. The last item asked the teacher participants to consider what they wanted their students to understand in 40 days, 40 months, and 40 years

(Wiggins & McTighe, 1998). This was to elicit the big ideas of relevance that the teachers had about literacy content.

The design of the measurements was addressed by providing open-ended questions to give the participants the opportunity to express their needs and goals and to describe assets; however, some questions were designed to include literacy support options for participants who may not have been aware of the various types of support or have known the appropriate terminology. Concern for the participants remained foremost in my mind as I created the instrument. I reviewed each question multiple times to ensure that the wording was clear and concise. Then I worked with an expert interpreter to revise questions as needed. The interpreter was a native Spanish speaker from Latin America who was a nationally board-certified Spanish teacher in Colorado; therefore, I was confident that the translations were high quality. The interpreter spent many hours translating the survey to ensure that the questions were worded in such a way as to most accurately relay the meaning. While I was administering the survey, one of the assistant principals at the school read the survey and made the comment that the translation was very good.

This survey was administered to the teacher participants at their school a couple of months before the professional development program began. I visited each school, explained the survey, answered any questions, and waited while they completed the written responses. At each location, an interpreter from the school staff was available, but a professional interpreter was not hired for this part since the survey was written in Spanish.



I failed to read over the answers and complete a member check before I left Honduras. Consequently, several of the answers did not pertain to the question asked, and I was initially unable to use the data. A face-to-face follow-up with the participants occurred during a subsequent visit to Honduras, and I was able to get the questions answered.

Teacher Belief and Practices Survey. Collecting data on beliefs without multiple data sources is viewed as problematic (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1998). Therefore, multiple data sources were utilized to collect data on teacher beliefs. The Teacher Belief and Practices Survey (TBPS) tool was used in conjunction with interviews and observations. Pajares (1992) stated that to increase validity, assessment of beliefs must include “teachers’ verbal expressions, predispositions to action, and teaching behaviors” (p. 327).

The TBPS contains 33 questions. The questions ask about beliefs and current practices. The first four questions present a scenario and asks the teachers to identify with a group. To mitigate the tendency for socially desirable responses, I composed these questions based on the model from Harter’s Perceived Competence Scale for Children (1982). Harter developed a “structure alternative format” in which a child is asked to identify with one group of children described on the left or another group of children on the right. This structure is effective due to the implication that half of the children view themselves in a certain way, and the other half view themselves in another way. Next, the child must determine if the statement is “really true” or “sort of true” for them (1982, p. 89). This structure provides two legitimate choices for an initial answer and a range of answers to identify with the initial choice. For the two questions on the survey, I crafted

two scenarios which involved two groups of teachers and the participants had to indicate which group they most identified with. Then they had to choose if the description of the selected group was “mostly true” or “somewhat true” for them. The remaining questions require a Likert Scale response, with a scale of 1 to 5 and the choices of *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*, respectively.

The TBPS was administered during the second week of the research project. This survey was written in Spanish and required a written response. The teachers filled out the survey at the same time, and I was available with a translator for any questions they had. The translator gave instructions to the teachers about the survey before they started. As the teachers were filling out the survey, I noticed that for the Likert scale responses, they were answering “Sí” or “No,” instead of a numerical value between 1-5. We stopped, and the translator explained how to answer using the scale and drew a diagram on the whiteboard. Another challenge that arose during the administration of the first survey was the teachers indicated the teaching methods that they used in class were not necessarily what they would choose to do if given the choice. I told them to answer the questions with what they were currently practicing in the classroom.

The original plan was to administer the TBPS three times during the research project. However, attaining written responses from the teacher participants proved to be a challenge. Very little was written on the open-ended questions on the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey and after much prompting, I received only one out of six of the written teacher reflections. Consequently, I decided to eliminate one of the surveys. The TBPS was administered at the beginning and at the end of the program.

Seminar evaluation. An evaluation was administered at the end of the seminar consisting of 10 questions and an open-ended response for additional comments. Using a Likert scale, the questions asked about the usefulness of each component of the seminar and what aspects could be changed to improve the seminar. Six participants and one non-participant teacher attended the seminar; therefore, seven evaluations were completed regarding the content of the seminar. The non-participating teacher signed an informed consent form, allowing me to use any data collected during the seminar period. The evaluation was anonymous; however, two teachers chose to sign their names to the paper.

#### Trustworthiness and Validity

Several steps were taken to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggested utilizing the strategies of triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, researcher's position, peer review, and an audit trail to enhance the validity of a qualitative study. Additionally, the authors recommended thick, rich descriptions and maximum variation to enhance transferability. These strategies, along with persistent observations, were utilized to gain a deeper understanding of the issues related to the research questions and to fortify the trustworthiness and validity of the study.

Multiple data sources were used to enable triangulation. The data demand this kind of analysis, which assists my ability to answer my research questions by providing data from various sources to support my findings. Data on assets and needs were collected via a survey and observations. Data on teacher beliefs and current practice were collected via a survey, observations, and interviews. Data on CoP were collected via observations, interviews, and a survey. Moreover, analyzing multiple data sources enabled me to pursue a discrepant case analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Member checks were conducted on interview material and the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, although not all member checks were conducted immediately after data collection. Another strategy, adequate engagement in data collection, was utilized to address both research questions. Saturation response was attained by the end of the data collection period, as no new information surfaced regarding the research questions.

Researcher's position was described in the researcher stance section and clarified my assumptions, experience, and biases. A peer review was conducted by my committee, and an audit trail was created by keeping a research journal, describing in detail how data were collected, how categories were created, and the decision-making process throughout the project (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Qualitative research is typically not thought of in terms of generalizability, but Merriam and Tisdell (2016) encouraged qualitative researchers to think in terms of transferability, working hypotheses, or extrapolation. With transferability, the original investigator provides enough descriptive information so that the reader may apply certain aspects of the research that fit their needs (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A working hypothesis reflects "situation-specific conditions in a particular context" and extrapolation allows one to go "beyond the narrow confines of the data to think about other applications of the findings" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 254). Detailed descriptions were utilized to describe the setting, participants, and findings to enhance transferability. Maximum variation was utilized in choosing participants from two different schools, rather than choosing all participants from the same school.

## Data Analysis

A case study model provided the template for data analysis which consisted of category construction (Merriam, 2009), creation of a case study database or record (Yin, 2003), interpreting data, identifying patterns, and creating generalizations (Creswell, 2013). Each of these components were addressed in an analytical framework.

The analytical framework outlined by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) was utilized to establish a data management plan: (a) familiarization with the data, (b) identifying a thematic framework, (c) indexing/coding, (d) charting, and (e) mapping and interpretation. The coding process included analytical coding, which involves interpretation and reflection, and was used to group comments and notes into categories (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This analytical framework was chosen because it addresses data analysis components described by Merriam (2009), Yin (2003), and Creswell (2007) for case study methodology. This framework is a good fit because the five components provide multiple levels with which to evaluate and analyze the collected data. The mapping and charting components were particularly appealing since they involve a visual representation of the data. Visually representing the data was essential due to the numerous steps involved in the process from Research Question 1. Mapping and charting the data was also useful for managing the data for Research Question 2, which involved three different components.

Analysis was completed in three phases. Phase I involved analyzing data from the Asset and Needs Assessment Survey to develop a professional development program.

The analytical framework was utilized for Phase II of the data analysis process. Although

the analytical framework is presented numerically, which suggests a linear process, I found the process of analysis to be iterative.

- Phase I: Analyze Assets and Needs Assessment
  - Identify the priorities for content from teacher responses
  - Clarify answers through member checks
  - Observe the teachers to understand the schedule and how they teach literacy
- Phase II: Utilize analytical framework
- Phase III: Review data
  - Evaluation and synthesis

#### Phase I Analysis

Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. I administered the survey in July during a brief trip to Honduras. I reviewed the data from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey when I returned to the United States and quickly realized that I should have conducted a member check before I left Honduras. One participant did not answer the questions correctly, and I had no data from her that I could use. However, I was able discuss her answers, through a translator, during the seminar.

From analyzing the aggregate data, I felt confident that I included the top choices. However, I also wanted to disaggregate the data to view the individual results to make sure that each participant had most of their top choices addressed. I created a table that included each participant and their choices and crossed off items that would be covered in the professional development content. The data required this multi-layer analysis to

adequately address the first research question regarding the creation of a professional development program.

After analyzing the data, I began to create a professional development program that would address phonics, comprehension, struggling readers, motivation, and skills. Due to the nature of the activities and strategies presented, I also included fluency and the reading/writing connection. For example, I incorporated Shared Reading in the content. I chose Shared Reading because it can address phonics, comprehension, motivation, and several skills. Additionally, Shared Reading happens to be an excellent tool for supporting fluency.

I integrated the findings from current teacher practices and self-selected content with known best practices (see Table 5). Data on current teacher practices revealed that most of the teachers taught in a traditional, whole-group method. Therefore, I needed to include strategies and content in the seminar that would work in a whole-group setting. I also needed to include the self-identified content of phonics, comprehension, helping struggling readers, and motivate/teach skills in the content.

Table 5

*Incorporation of Elements with Best Practices*

Self-selected Content	Current Teaching Practices	Best Practices	Seminar Content
Phonics	Taught in isolation	Systematic and explicit instruction Learning supported with the use of authentic text	Use the government book for the order of instruction; shared reading to teach the sounds of letters
Comprehension	I saw no evidence that this was explicitly taught	Strategic readers	Share strategies: before, during, and after; making predictions, asking questions Read aloud
Help struggling readers	Saturday class (about 5% attend)	Provide readable texts	Shared reading: demonstrate how to support struggling readers Reader's Theater
Motivate and teach skills	Prizes and awards; some teachers change the desks around.	Skills taught in the context of authentic text; use cultural pieces, poetry, or music for motivation	Shared reading to teach a variety of skills Reader's Theater
Reading/writing connection (my choice)		Reading and writing are reciprocal processes	Mentor texts Modeled writing

I chose the following content for the seminar because of the whole-group application and alignment with best practices: read aloud, shared reading, and Reader's Theater. These elements were incorporated with the self-selected content to create the seminar material. Additional considerations were physical constraints (large class size and limited desks/tables), material constraints (other than the government textbook, no materials were provided by the school), and policy constraints (the material in the government books must be taught).

Shared reading was used for many of the elements because it is appropriate for whole-group, did not require expensive materials, and the content could be customized to student interest. Simple additions, such as making an individual copy of the refrain, chorus, or simple phrases, could also help struggling readers by providing readable text.



The read aloud was used to model the comprehension strategies of asking questions, making predictions, and thinking about the text before, during, and after reading. Reader's Theater was demonstrated and included as a motivational activity that could also support struggling readers. Scripts were available, or could be written, which varied the text difficulty among the characters.

During the first week of residency in Honduras, I visited each school and observed each teacher in their classroom. These observations provided context for the responses on the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The data collected during these observations were analyzed and integrated into the professional development program before the seminar began the following week.

#### Phase II Analysis

Familiarization with the data. The process for this step involved data management. First, a catalog was recorded of all the collected data to create a case database (Yin, 2003). Next, I read through all the data and began to organize the information into data piles.

During the research phase, I started to disaggregate some of the data to create participant profiles. Once I returned from Honduras and began Phase II, I pulled additional information from the data piles and completed the participant profiles. Case study is the chosen methodology; therefore, it is important to not only view the data as a whole, but also from the individual perspective to better understand each participant's story.

Theme 2, the revised flowchart, began as I reconstructed the process from the research journal notes, observational notes, travel documents, photographs, and the

Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. I reviewed the highlighted data in the preparation folder, which consisted of research journal notes, planning notes jotted in the margin, and travel documents. I also reviewed photographs and all digital communication. Then, I wrote a narrative of a chronological account describing the steps involved in the process. I went back and compared this narrative to my research journal notes, observational notes, and photographs. After that, I created a flowchart for each step of the process. I compared the flowchart to the narrative and then visually walked through the process, placing myself at the location as I read the narrative. This analysis resulted in the realization that several steps were missing from the flowchart. The missing steps were confirmed in the research journal notes and added to the flowchart. Reviewed in isolation, the flowchart presented a reasonable, chronological representation of a process. The same holds true for the chronological account. However, when the two models were compared concurrently, obvious gaps in the process became apparent.

The data were analyzed by reviewing notes from my research journal, messages from WhatsApp, travel documents, and emails. The results were charted, reviewed, and rearranged; then the results were checked against dates from my research journal. From the chart, I created a chronological account to track each step of the preparation process. The process involved preparation for research, preparation for the seminar, and preparation for residing in another country. The research component encompassed a thorough review of the literature, creating and translating a proposal and data collection tools, collecting and analyzing initial data, acquiring the necessary approval from the IRB board, and gathering more data on Honduran culture. Preparing for a seminar involved reviewing best practices from the review of the literature, analyzing data, preparing and

translating materials, scheduling a place for the seminar, and purchasing materials. Preparing to live abroad involved organizing travel documents, securing transportation on the island and a place to live, and arranging to transport all seminar materials. Quotes from the participants taken from the survey demonstrate one aspect of preparation for the professional development program. I prepared content for the seminar from their responses on the survey, and I also prepared responses to questions and concerns expressed in the comment section. The notes from my research journal show preparation activities, such as arranging translation services, managing the pilot study, following up on participant names, preparing the survey, and completing a list of items before arriving in Honduras for the study. The photographs are of the seminar location and helped me to plan for equipment and space.

From the data, I created a process flowchart (Appendix N). A flowchart was the best method to illustrate the results due to the complex nature of the process, which involved concurrent activities and decision junctures. The flowchart represents the actions as they occurred and decision pathways created in anticipation of possible obstacles in the early stage of the process. For example, the first decision juncture on the flowchart is “Proposal accepted?” If the proposal was not accepted by the directors in Honduras, I was prepared to consider alternative locations.

I arranged a descriptive chronological account to provide context for the process flowchart. A chronological account was a natural fit since creating an asset-driven professional development program was an evolving process. Wolcott (1994) suggested that a chronological account is one way of presenting and organizing description, and it

offers an “efficient alternative” (p. 17) to lengthy passages that try to otherwise create flow.

Throughout the chronology, context provided detailed descriptions of places and events on the island. These brief descriptive snapshots offered an additional approach to understanding local culture, the nuances of setting, and the concept of place. Firestone (1987) explained that “The qualitative study provides the reader with a depiction in enough detail to show that the author’s conclusion ‘makes sense’” (p. 19).

Analyzing the data from a chronology of events enabled me to view the data in context and note incremental changes. As the process evolved, some steps were discrete and separate, while others transpired concurrently. The descriptive chronological account covers the first stage of preparation and provides a detailed description of the context (Table 6). The complete chronological account is located in Appendix P.

Table 6

*Index of Chronological Account*

Topic	Description
The beginning	Describes the process of attaining permission to conduct research at the location
The island	Describes my first sight of the island
The schools	Describes each school

Identify a thematic framework. Key issues and themes were identified. This process continued concurrently with coding and charting. During coding, emerging themes were noted, and categories were created. I created categories through both an inductive and deductive process. In qualitative research, themes and categories are typically inductively derived from the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, the complex nature of data analysis often “involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). I created categories inductively from reviewing emerging themes discovered in the data and deductively by reviewing important concepts from the review of the literature.

Indexing and coding. I completed a second reading of the data, and made additional in the margins. Subsequent readings resulted in additional notes. I used analytical coding to combine, delete, and add categories. I organized codes into the following categories: revisions, self-selection, asset-driven, communication, flexibility, and theory. Once the main categories were established, I created a color-coded folder for each category. Two additional folders were created: *general* and *lingering questions*. The general folder served as a holding place for noteworthy items that did not fit in an existing category. I identified supporting data for each category, which led to the charting process. Then, I color-coded each piece of data and placed in the corresponding file. I reviewed all my data and highlighted any information related to the themes in the corresponding color. I highlighted, copied, and placed each piece in the color-coded folder. By reviewing each folder and charting the data, I recognized further themes. Many items from the general folder eventually proved to be useful in several emerging themes.

Charting. I constructed a chart to organize supporting data for each category. Then I constructed tables to organize the data; a necessary step to map and interpret data.

Mapping and interpretation. Mapping occurred throughout the analysis process as a method to compare and contrast findings and to create visual representations of my thinking process. The tables, thinking maps, and process flowcharts created visual representations of data which provided one avenue to begin interpreting the data and identifying patterns.

### Phase III Analysis

Review data. This phase began with reviewing the proposed schedule for the professional development program and then creating an actual schedule. The two schedules were compared and evaluated. A process flowchart was created during the mapping and interpreting phase which detailed the process of creating the professional development program.

The review continued with data relating to attaining a balance among teacher current practice, self-selected content, and known best practices. I reviewed the process for creating a professional development program regarding each of the aforementioned components.

Evaluation and synthesis. In the process for creating a professional development program, I first evaluated the chronology and then evaluated against participant feedback, observational notes, and survey data. Subsequently, I synthesized the information to create an improved, revised process flowchart.

I evaluated the attainment of balance among teacher practice, self-selected content, and known best practices. The evaluation consisted of identifying data on each component and assessing the consistency and depth in which the component was

addressed during the program. This evaluation addressed the issue of quality, quantity, and if the components were integrated in a meaningful way. Next, I evaluated each component on how it was integrated into the professional development program. This evaluation addressed the mechanics, or process, of integration.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the methodology for this descriptive case study. For this study, I documented the process of creating and implementing a specific professional development program and how a balance was achieved among current teacher practices, self-selected content, and known best practices. The study involved a bounded system consisting of six public school primary teachers in Honduras. I built the case study around two research questions on the theoretical foundation of constructivism. I derived results from the study from multiple data sources and answered the research questions regarding the process and implementation of a specific professional development program in a developing country and how to achieve a balance among identified components.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Revising a Process and Achieving a Balance

The results of this descriptive case study are presented in this chapter. I applied an analytical framework, outlined by Ritchie and Spencer (1994), to manage the data. For the data analysis process, I used two methods to identify categories. I looked specifically for data related to the research questions and then I reviewed the data to identify emerging themes. For question 1, I reviewed data for the revised process flowchart, self-selected content, and the asset-driven model. From this review, I created four themes for the results: (a) addressing critical theory issues such as the three ecologies of knowing (self, community, and organization) is an important step in the process, (b) the revised process flowchart is an effective tool for creating a professional development program based on an asset-driven model with self-selected content, (c) flexibility is necessary in this context, and (d) effective communication is vital, challenging, and requires thoughtful planning.

The categories of communication and flexibility align with social constructivist theory and the CLE theory of change. Communication is required for co-constructing knowledge and collaboration. Categorizing data on this topic can highlight how communication contributed to the social construction of knowledge and instances where this failed. Communication is also an important category to address concepts from the



CLE theory of change. Building relationships is a core concept of this theory, and communication plays an essential role in building relationships. Also, communication is vital for incorporating the concepts of story, place, and assets. The final justification for including communication as a category was that the study took place in a country where the primary spoken language is Spanish. An English-speaking researcher conducting a study in a Spanish-speaking location places the category of communication in a prominent position.

The category of flexibility aligns with the concept of co-constructing knowledge. Flexibility allowed for adjustments to the content of the program, which came from collaboration with the teacher participants and co-constructing the process.

A category related to the process was necessary due to the complex nature of this research project. The process involved many steps of preparation and notes on the process constituted a large portion of the collected data. Aspects of the process and preparation also align with the CLE theory of change and the asset-driven model, as part of the preparation involved gathering data on assets and learning of the teacher participants' stories.

This category began as "process and preparation" but eventually transformed into the revised process flowchart category as I analyzed how to best answer the first research question. The process and preparation are important part of the research project, but mainly address procedure. The revised process flowchart addresses both the procedure and the research question.

After identifying the categories, I intentionally looked for alternative categories to refute my results and sought a peer review of alternative categories. It was during this

phase that I added the category of theory. In reviewing the data, I read through the items that were initially placed in a folder marked *general*. I noticed a pattern in which much of the data related to the concepts from the CLE theory of change, such as place and assets. Moreover, as an additional tool for analysis, concepts from the theory proved valuable in recognizing areas of strength and areas for improvement. I realized that the critical theory concepts were the foundation of the process on which all other components were built. Consequently, established the first theme to address critical theory issues.

As an added validity procedure, I requested a peer review of the data from a fellow doctoral student. The peer review resulted in the identified categories of language, culture, and creating a CoP. After discussing the process with the fellow student, we concluded that the categories of language and communication covered much of the same material. Furthermore, the topics in culture were addressed in the categories of effective communication, flexibility, and addressing critical theory concepts. Therefore, culture could be an umbrella category for those categories. This peer review interpretation of the data illustrates how individuals may view information through a different lens and that my categories are not the only possibilities for organizing the data. The subjective creation of categories can be a limitation in qualitative data analysis; therefore, incorporating a peer review can be a valuable process.

The first research question is addressed at the beginning of this chapter:

- Q1 In a developing country, what process is the best fit for creating and implementing a professional development program based on an asset-driven model and self-selected literacy content?

I analyzed data from six sources, which resulted in the identification of three emerging themes.

The latter part of this chapter addresses the second research question:

Q2 How is a balance attained among current practice, self-selected content, and known best practices in literacy instruction?

Through progressive focusing, I address the second research question by examining the data from a broad context, across participants, and then focusing on specific participant results. Progressive focusing is useful when addressing a well-defined problem, and the focus typically moves in both directions (Wolcott, 1994). The data examined includes the TBPS, the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, observations, and interviews. The data were analyzed across participants and at the individual participant level.

#### Question 1: The Process

Results on the process were obtained from the following data sources: (a) the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, (b) research journal notes, (c) observational notes, (d) seminar evaluations, and (e) final interviews. I collected responses to the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey from all participants. Research journal notes included data regarding chronology and scheduling efforts. Observational field notes included descriptions of the setting and activities, my reflections on the process, and feedback from the participants during the seminar. Each participant and one non-participant attendee completed an evaluation at the end of the seminar. The final interviews were completed with four of the six participants due to the unavailability of two participants.

From the results, I generated four themes regarding the process of creating and implementing a professional development program. First, addressing critical theory issues such as the three ecologies of knowing (self, community, and organization) is an important step in the process. Second, the revised flowchart is a good fit for creating an asset-driven professional development program with self-selected content. Third,

flexibility is necessary for implementation in this context, and fourth, effective communication was vital, challenging, and required careful planning. Themes 1 and 4 address the creating and implementing aspects of the process, while theme 2 addresses creating and theme 3 addresses implementing.

Direct quotes from the participants are included in the findings as they were originally written in Spanish. It can be difficult to translate nuances of meaning; therefore, the comments from the participants are provided in Spanish to honor their thoughts and language. English translations follow.

#### Theme 1: Addressing the Three Ecologies of Knowing is Crucial

Addressing critical theory issues such as the three ecologies of knowing (self, community, and organization) is an important step in the process (Guajardo, et al., 2016). The three ecologies of knowing address the affective and relational aspects of creating and implementing a professional development program. Addressing the three ecologies is crucial for developing an asset-based program. I will discuss the ways in which the three ecologies of knowing were incorporated into the creation and implementation of the program and how they supported the success of the program.

I addressed the topic of “self” in the creation and implementation of the professional development program. Guajardo, et al., (2016) explain that participants involved in the change process are encouraged to understand their personal stories so that they can “look to their own gifts and the values of the community for solutions” (p. 15). The Assets and Needs Assessment Survey addressed the topic during the creating phase of the professional development program by asking the participants to write about their

talents, gifts, and experience. This provided the participants an opportunity to reflect on the areas in which they excel and positive professional traits. I used the data from the survey to begin creating an asset-based professional development program.

The following is a sample of the responses:

*Responsable, dedicado, servicial colaboradora* (Responsible, dedicated, service-oriented, collaborative) (Lucia).

*Que soy una persona muy servicial, divertida colaboradora, dinámica y atenta* (I am a very helpful person, fun, dynamic, and attentive collaborator) (Ruth).

*Humilde, sencillo, trato de tener las cosas con anticipación, actualmente olvido con frecuencia* (Humble, practicality, I try to approach things with excitement, I am often forgetful) (Teresa).

During the implementation phase of the professional development program, the participants were asked to bring in an artefact to tell their story. Each participant brought one or more physical items to share with the group. Then each participant had the opportunity to tell their story and how the item related to that story (Figure 6).

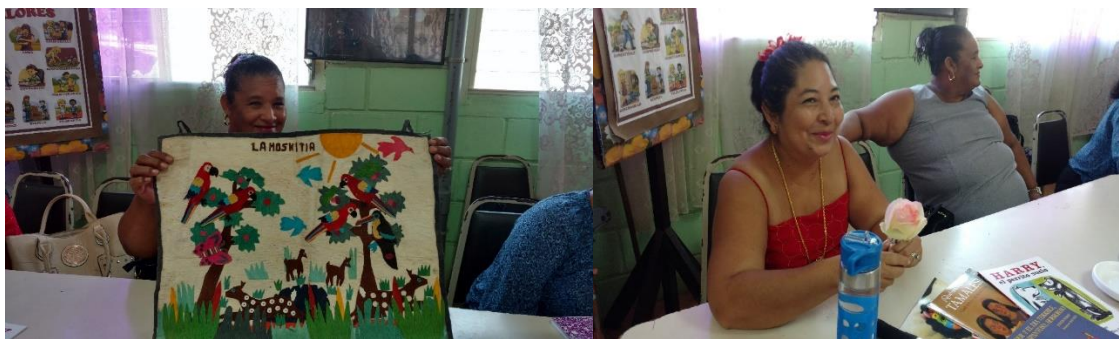


Figure 6. Sharing artifacts

In telling their story and listening to the other stories, the participants seemed to gain more confidence in their role as a collaborator. I noticed a discernible difference in the engagement and interaction of the participants after the sharing of artifacts. Excerpts from my field notes illustrate the difference. The first entry is from the first day of the

seminar; before the participants brought in and shared artifacts. The second entry is from the next day, after they shared.

We were to begin at 7:30. Two directors and one teacher were there at 7:30. I was not sure if the directors were going to participate in the training or not. I was concerned about the teachers not showing up and one of the directors stated, 'You have your clock and you have Honduran clock. 80% of people do not show up on time'. Two more teachers arrived at 7:40. (Field notes, October 3, 2016) Today went well. They had a few questions. Not a lot of interaction. I handed out materials and placed picture books in the center of the table. No one touched the books. (October 3, 2016; reflection notes). All of the participants arrived on time and a new one attended. Each person shared their artifact and told how it related to their story. Much more interaction. The teachers were talking among themselves and directly to me. Much less tension. More conversation about content. During the break, a couple of teachers flipped through the picture books. (October 4, 2016; notes)

Addressing "self" with this activity supported the success of the professional development program by helping to engage the participants in the seminar content. After the artifact activity, the participants continued to engage in conversations, asked questions, and demonstrated curiosity regarding materials.

Also during the implementation phase, the participants were asked to tell the story of their journey to become a teacher. Each participant described when they first considered becoming a teacher and their journey to becoming a licensed educator. With each story, I learned more about the passion and dedication of each participant. Learning more about each participant helped me to better understand their professional history and build relationships. One participant explained that she had always been interested in teaching and started helping in Sunday school. By the time she was 11, she was given her own Sunday school class to teach. Another participant explained that her parents decided that her major in college would be education and she did not enjoy studying to be a teacher, but she enjoys teaching. Each of these stories is explained in greater detail in the participant profiles.

Both “community” and “organization” were addressed with the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. Community was addressed by asking the teachers to identify the availability of volunteers and other resources. Organization was addressed by asking the teachers what they were required to teach and if they were required to use specific materials.

From this data, I learned that there were few material resources available to the teachers and that they were required to use the government book to teach language arts. This helped me to plan the content of the seminar by considering how to incorporate material from the government books. Also, the limited availability of classroom volunteers had an impact on what types of activities that I introduced to the teacher participants.

I gathered additional information regarding the community from interviews. Several teachers explained that high absenteeism is a problem and that they wanted parents to be more involved in their children’s education. One of the directors explained that a problem was *Interesar a un más al padre de familia en la educación de sus hijos*. (To interest more families in the education of their children). The information helped me to better understand the community in which we were working. This helped me to better understand the issues that the participants and administrators felt were important. Exploring personal stories, building relationships, and understanding the organization and community are crucial steps in the process of creating and implementing an asset-driven professional development program with self-selected content.

## Theme 2: The Revised Process Flowchart is an Effective Tool

This theme addresses the process of creating a professional development program based on an asset-driven model and self-selected literacy content. I looked for data to confirm or refute the efficacy of the revised process flowchart (Figure 7). Data from my research journal notes, observational notes, seminar schedule, photographs, digital communication, and the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey support the revised process flowchart as a good fit for creating a professional development program based with self-selected literacy content. The revised process flowchart also supports an asset-driven model, even when material resources are scarce.



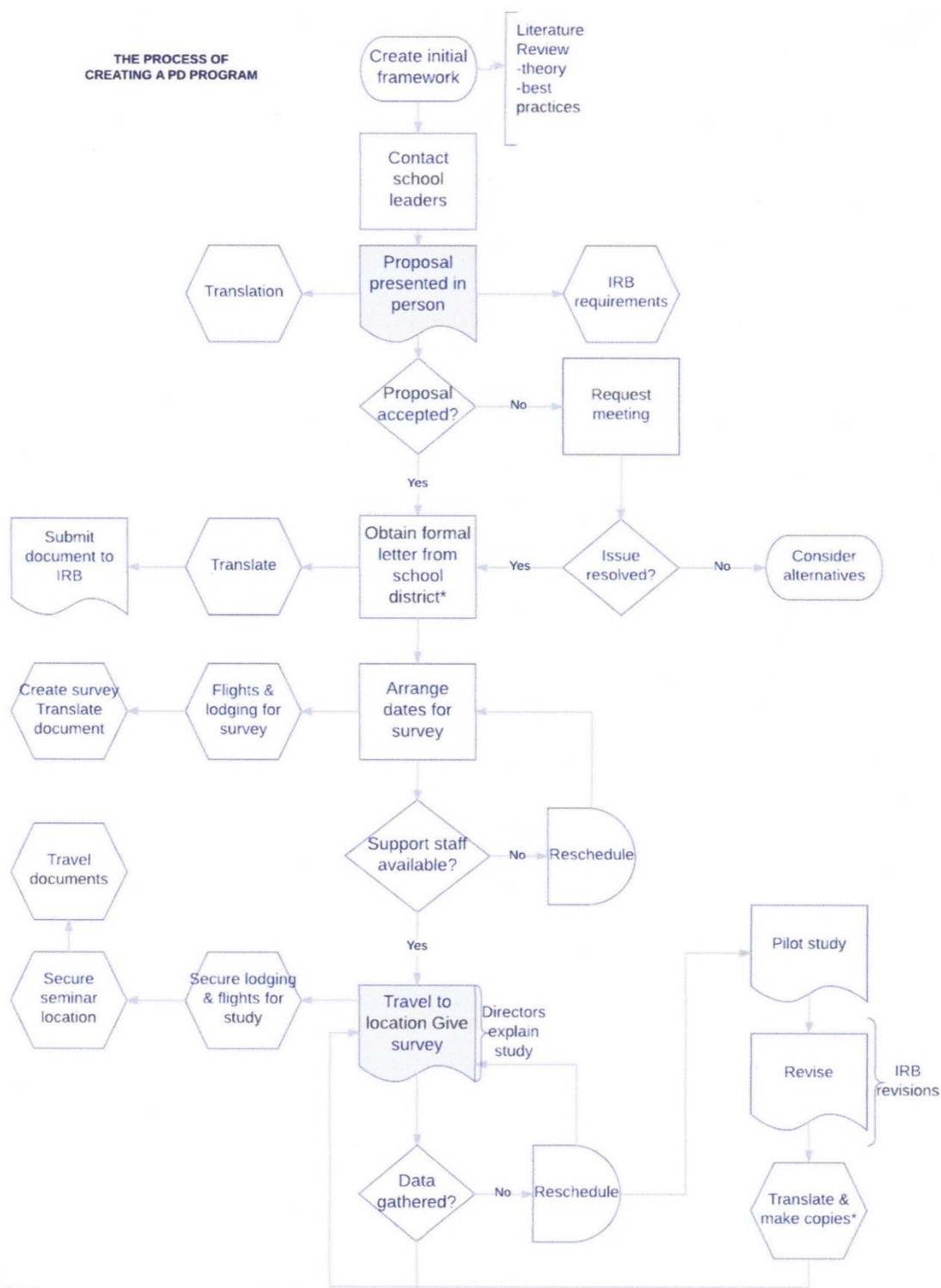


Figure 7. Revised process flowchart.

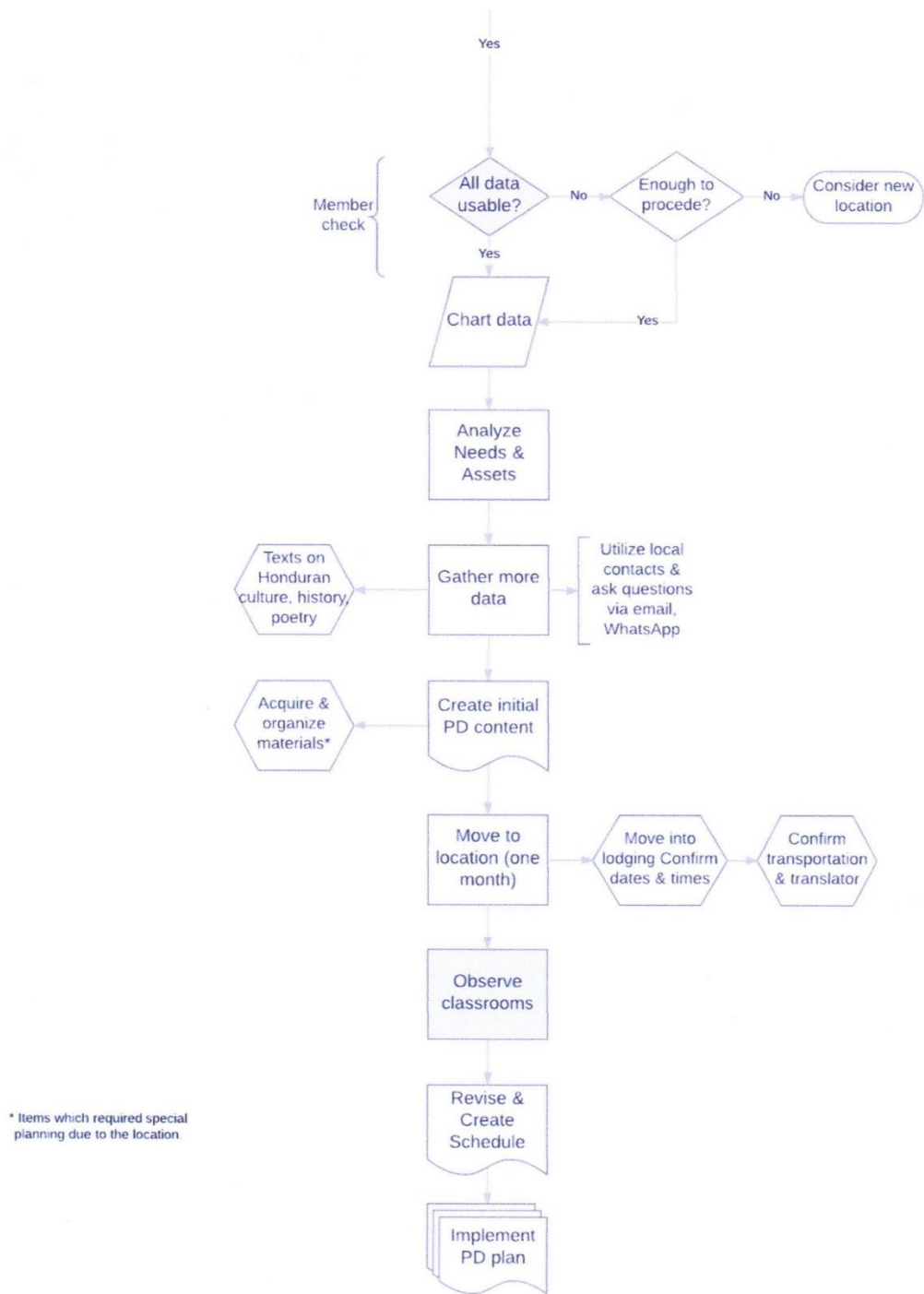


Figure 7, continued

I created a flowchart to document the process of creating and implementing the professional development program. A review of my notes, the seminar schedule, and reflection on the process prompted me to revise the flowchart to create a more effective process. Five areas on the flowchart were revised (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Revisions to Process Flowchart*

Original Process Flowchart	Revised Process Flowchart
Proposal presented	Proposal presented in person
Travel to location to give survey	Travel to location to give survey: directors explain study
Data gathered	All data usable
Observe classrooms	Observe classrooms: several hours and several days in each classroom
Revise	Revise and create schedule

The first revision was to change ‘Proposal presented’ to ‘Proposal presented in person’. This change was made after a reflection on my experiences during the professional development program, reviewing observational field notes, and reviewing digital communication with my contact.

For the “Proposal presented” step, I wrote the proposal, had it translated, and emailed it to a local contact so that I would not have to travel to the island for a 20-minute presentation. A local contact presented my proposal for the research study at a director’s meeting. Despite the financial concerns of an additional trip, introducing the proposal to the school leaders should be included in the process. Additionally, this would have provided the opportunity to acquire contact information for the directors of each

participating school. At the time, I did not understand how difficult it could be to contact a school director.

Data supporting this revision from my observational field notes included:

I've been surprised at the lack of communication about this project. I wish I would have been at the meeting when my proposal was presented to the directors. (September 26, 2016; reflection)

I explained about the seminar schedule (he didn't know when we started) and asked him for an interview. (September 28, 2016, notes)

Presenting the proposal in person would have allowed me to meet the all the directors of the schools, understand how the project was presented to the directors, and understand the hierarchy of the school administrators and how they communicate. Understanding how decisions are made for the schools, who has the power to make the decisions, and how information is communicated to the directors could have helped my planning process. Having the proposal presented in my absence left many of these questions unanswered. I received little information regarding how the proposal was presented, who approved it, and how much information was shared with the directors. The following correspondence is the only information that I received from my district contact: "The board approved very well they are so happy and glad fir your project. I will send you the list of teacher to shall going to training." (May 2, 2016 via Facebook Messenger).

Presenting the proposal in person is an important change to the process flowchart. I could have gained important information about how the schools operate and how much the directors were told about the research project.

The next revision changed 'Travel to location to give survey' to 'Travel to location to give survey: Directors explain study'. I made this revision after reviewing the

data on the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, observational field notes, and conversations with the teacher participants during the seminar. When I arrived to administer the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, the teacher participants were very quiet and barely made eye contact with me. I found out later that they did not know much about why I was at their school asking them to fill out a survey. Two of the questions they asked on the survey are below:

“¿Por qué están interesados ustedes en este proyecto?” (Why are all of you interested in this project?) (Lucia)

Another teacher wrote:

“¿Cual es su interes por nuestra escuela?” (“What is your interest in our school?”) (Ruth)

The observation of their body language during the administration of the survey and the tone of the questions above led me to the conclusion that some of the teacher participants were proceeding with caution. Through conversations during the seminar I learned that the directors had not told the teachers much information about the program.

From my field notes:

I handed out the surveys and explained what the questions were about. The translator explained. The teachers were quiet and didn't ask many questions; they did not make much eye contact. (July 25<sup>th</sup>, School 1).

Ruth asked questions about observing a class in the U.S. Lucia did not make eye contact with me unless I had direct contact like handing her a pen. (July 25<sup>th</sup>, School 2)

I later found out that the principals did not explain the program. The teachers really didn't have any idea why I was there. They had only briefly been told of my visit. (July 25<sup>th</sup>, reflection)

The teacher participants could have benefitted from an explanation of the research project and how the schools were chosen. This would have allowed them time to think

about questions they may have regarding the seminar and rather than asking why I was interested in their school. Also, knowing more about the project might have helped to alleviate their initial cautious approach.

The third revision changed ‘Data gathered?’ to ‘All data usable?’. The change resulted from reviewing the data from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The responses on one of the surveys were marked incorrectly and did not yield useful data. For this reason, I added the ‘All data usable’ to the flowchart to prompt a member check on site.

The fourth revision changed ‘Observe classrooms’ to ‘Observe classrooms: Several hours & several days per classroom’. I would have benefited from spending more time in the teachers’ classrooms. This additional time would have given me the opportunity to know more about their teaching methods, schedule, and teaching style. This knowledge would have helped me approach the seminar with more confidence and a better picture of how the participants taught. One example is that I later learned one of the teachers liked to incorporate crafts into the instructional day. Another example is that I did not realize students only receive about four hours of instruction per day. This information could have had an impact on the content of the seminar.

The last revision changed ‘Revise’ to ‘Revise and Create a Schedule’. I made this change due to data from my research notes on creating the professional development program. After the classroom observations, I revised the seminar content to reflect available resources. For example, guided reading was not a good choice for the seminar content due to lack of material and staff resources. Once I revised the content, I proceeded to create a daily schedule for the seminar (see Table 8). Creating a daily

schedule after revising the content was an important step in the process. The daily schedule helped me to ensure that relevant content was covered and that data collection occurred at opportune times. For example, the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey revealed few material resources. Therefore, including time in the daily schedule to discuss assets of the school and community was important for data collection and content. I included these steps in the initial process, however, I failed to include the steps in the first process flowchart.

Table 8

*Daily Seminar Schedule*


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Day	Seminar Topics
Module 1; Day 1	30 minutes. Answer questions from survey. Explain schedule. Explain the commitment involved. 30 minutes. The Process of Change. 30 minutes. Share a story about one of your first memories of learning something in school, or learning to read. It is vital to build a community. 30 minutes. Discuss assets of school and community. Bring in an artifact that tells your story for tomorrow.
Module 2; Day 2	Community building activity: share artifacts Literacy Processing Theory Break Use artifacts to model writing Read Aloud, Part I Overview of best practices K-3 (10 classroom practices to improve literacy development)
Module 3; Day 3	Comprehension Strategies Read Aloud, Part II Hand out books and choose a lesson (see Figure 9) Community of practice-review all six steps. Take time to work on purpose and schedule.
Module 4; Day 4	Shared Reading Power Point Create Shared Reading lesson Practice Shared Reading
Module 5; Day 5	Review the week. Revisit 10 practices Start a CoP Community of practice-review all six steps. Take time to work on purpose and schedule. Schedule observations

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*Figure 8. Module 3: Choosing a lesson for Read Aloud.*

The revised process flowchart provides support for creating a professional development program with self-selected content. Several steps on the flowchart address administering the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, checking the data, and analyzing the data. This process was effective in identifying self-selected content. The teacher participants were very engaged with the content of the seminar. I asked them, via WhatsApp if it was an advantage to choose the topics for the seminar. I received the following replies:

*Todos los temas que se dieron en la capacitación fueron de mucha importancia y nos ayudaron en nuestra labor educativa con aquellos niños que necesitan lectura y escritura (All of the subjects that were given in the training were of great importance and they helped us in our educational work with those children who need reading and writing) (Lucia)*

*Si fue una ventaja porque fueron técnicas o temas de suma importancia para el desarrollo en la lecto-escritura en nuestra niñez que so el futuro del mañana. (It [self-selected content] was an advantage because they were techniques of utmost importance for development in reading and writing.) (Ruth)*

*Todos los temas fueron importantes para mí, disfruté y aprendí mucho de todos, especialmente como ayudar a los niños con problemas de lectura y escritura.*

(All of the topics were important to me. I enjoyed it and learned a lot from everyone, especially how to help children with reading and writing problems).  
(Jenny)

The revised process flowchart supports an asset-driven model. A step in the flowchart is designated for administering the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The survey asks questions about available volunteers, resources, and experience. No material resources were identified from the survey responses and five teachers indicated that they do not have any volunteer help available; one teacher indicated that a volunteer was available 'sometimes'.

Although identified material resources were few, the survey provided information regarding years of teaching experience and additional training. Also, the survey responses revealed positive attributes that the teacher participants revealed about themselves. The human resources were a valuable asset to the program. The teacher participant's experience, motivation, and collaboration contributed to the success of the program.

The results for the revised process flowchart were derived from a triangulation of the data by comparing the seminar schedule, travel documents, email correspondence, photographs, Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, and field notes.

### Theme 3: Flexibility Is Necessary in This Context

The ability to respond flexibly to unforeseen circumstances was a necessity. Results from research and observational notes indicated that flexibility was consistently required for implementation to move forward with the seminar. I have provided several examples from my notes to illustrate this concept.

One example occurred the first day of the seminar. The seminar was scheduled to begin at 7:30 a.m., but only one teacher and two directors were present at 7:30. My local

contact explained, “You have your clock, and you have the Honduran clock. Eighty-percent of the people do not show up on time” (Field notes, October 3, 2016). Also, at that time, I was not sure if the directors were participating in the seminar or if there would be any extra teachers attending. The directors did not participate, but one did give an unexpected speech on the first day. Two extra teachers showed up for the seminar.

In another instance, I hosted a dinner and invited the directors and assistant directors from both schools. I had to arrange material to present, make reservations at a restaurant, and hire a translator. I followed up on all the invitations, but did not receive a firm confirmation from any of the people invited until the evening of the dinner when I received one confirmation.

In the results discussed below, I outline the adjustments that I made before and during the seminar. Flexibility to adjust to changes was one of the most prominent themes to emerge from the data. Out of eight scheduled events, I had to make one or more adjustments to 50% of the events for time or date (Table 9).

Table 9

*Schedule Adjustments*

Scheduled Event	Adjustment of Date or Time
Assets and Needs Assessment Survey/June	Changed the date
Assets and Needs Assessment Survey/July	No adjustment
First week of observations	No adjustment
Seminar	Changed the date Changed the time
Dinner meeting with directors	No adjustment
Observations after seminar	No adjustment
Observations after returning to Honduras	Changed the date
Observations/interviews at the end of the program	Changed the time

The need for flexibility mainly occurred in two areas: content of the seminar and schedule. Adjustments involving the schedule were necessary to complete the seminar. For example, when the schools had a holiday, the teachers were not available for the scheduled seminar.

Data from research journal notes and observational notes indicate that the plan for implementation had to be adjusted on at least seven different occasions. Results for the implementation of a professional development program indicated that flexibility to address unforeseen local issues is a necessity.

Changes made before the seminar and observation period included:

- The Assets and Needs Assessment Survey was delayed and rescheduled due to an unexpected teacher holiday.
- The Assets and Needs Assessment Survey was adjusted after results of the pilot study were reviewed.

Changes made during the seminar and observation period included:

- The first day of the seminar was delayed due to participants arriving late and an unexpected director speech.
- The seminar schedule was delayed due to another unexpected holiday.
- The first two hours of the seminar on Day 2 were adjusted due to disruptive activities at the seminar site.
- The seminar schedule on Day 3 was delayed due to a community parade (we could not talk over the sirens and drums).
- The participants requested that for one of the strategies, it be modeled with children. The seminar schedule was adjusted to accommodate this request.
- The observation schedule had to be adjusted due to the actual date of student attendance for the end of the year vs. the published date of student attendance. The school year officially ended the last week of November; however, students attended only through the first week of November.
- The observation schedule was adjusted for a special day at school. The students were preparing crafts for a special presentation the next day, so there was no teaching to observe.

A comparison of the proposed schedule that I developed for the program (Table 10) to the actual schedule that occurred (Table 11), illustrates the flexibility needed to continue moving the program forward. The actual schedule is two weeks shorter than the proposed schedule.

Table 10

*Proposed Schedule*

Scheduled Time	Scheduled Event
Pre-Seminar Contact	June: administer Assets and Needs Assessment Survey
Week 1	Meet teachers; tour schools; administrator survey; initial interviews
Week 2: October 3-7	Intensive 5-day instruction; TBS; member check interviews
Week 3: October 10-14	Classroom visits; conferences with teachers; meetings with teams; post-visit interviews; teacher reflections
Week 4: October 17-21	Collaborative meetings with teachers; teacher reflections; Establish CoP; second survey
Week 5: October 24-28	Continual support via virtual coaching and email dialogue; teacher reflections
Week 6: October 31-November 4	Teacher reflections
Week 7: November 7-11	Email individual teachers to check-in; teacher reflections
Week 8: November 14-18	Site visit to meet with teachers; 3 <sup>rd</sup> survey; teacher reflections; observational field notes; final interviews

Table 11

*Actual Schedule*

Scheduled Time	Scheduled Event
Pre-seminar contact	I arrived in June, but the teachers were on holiday. I planned a return trip
Pre-seminar contact 2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt	I returned in July and administered the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey
Week 1	Meet teachers; tour schools and observe classrooms
Week 2: October 3-4	Conducted the seminar on Monday and Tuesday; Wednesday-Friday was a holiday; administered TBS; began initial interviews
Week 3: October 10-11	Conducted remaining seminar content on Monday and Tuesday; completed initial interviews and member checks
October 12-14	No teacher reflections were completed
Week 4: October 17-21	I did not administer the TBS; teachers did not turn in reflections; classroom visits
Week 5: October 24-28	Teachers did not respond to emails; I traveled back to the U.S.
Week 6: October 31-November 4	Sight visits and observations; final interviews; field notes; TBS; no teacher reflections

To briefly summarize Theme 3, the process to implement the professional development program required flexibility to address continual revisions. Revisions to the process of implementation occurred out of necessity due to local circumstances and from an analysis of the data. To keep the seminar moving forward, I had to remain flexible.

Data from observations and interviews supported the revisions to the implementation process.

**Theme 4: Effective Communication is Vital, Challenging and Requires Planning**

Communication was a vital and difficult part of the process and implementation. This theme addresses communication with a local contact, directors of the two schools, and one assistant director, among staff, and with participants. Data for this theme were derived from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, email messages, WhatsApp messages, texts, surveys, interviews, feedback from teachers, research journal notes, and observations. The five results are described and an example is given for each one. Results indicated the following:

- Communicating to confirm dates and times and obtain information was challenging.
- My assumptions about communicating with and among schools was false.
- Email is not a viable tool to communicate with participants.
- Participants are more likely to respond to my communications when I am in their country.
- The differences in language posed a significant barrier to communication.

From the beginning, communicating to confirm dates and times and to obtain information was a challenge. Communication with a local contact began in the spring of 2016. This contact was a school director at a private school on the island who spoke Spanish and English. Communicating with this person was my primary method of



communicating with and about school personnel and school policy. It was through this contact that my proposal was submitted to the directors.

To schedule a time to administer the initial Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, I sent 24 messages via WhatsApp, and my local contact responded to the messages. However, when I arrived in the country to administer the survey, the teachers were away on vacation. I had to plan a return trip to administer the survey.

The next communication with my local contact was to request the names of the initial group of teachers chosen by the directors to participate. I sent the email on July 7 and then sent a follow-up email on July 18. I received a partial list in response. Table 12 displays a sample of conversations via email and WhatsApp.

Table 12

*Sample Conversations*

Method of Communication	My Messages	The Response
WhatsApp conversation 1: Local contact, June 26, 2016	“I need to find out how the 15 teachers were chosen. I will need to include that in my research.”	Each director select the teachers.”  “Ok, the director knows the need at each school, and we discussed for how shall be the impact of your training and send the teacher shall do the training. For example, I need a teacher with this training a Dios send one teacher a Dios myself. For that.”
WhatsApp conversation 2: Local contact, June 27, 2017	“Am I meeting with the teachers tomorrow?”  “I don’t understand. Are you saying that I can’t meet with the teachers this week? I am supposed to leave on Thursday. I can’t afford to make extra trips down here to collect data and leave without the data. I can’t develop a program”  “But you told me I could come this week.”	“They said it’s better than the meetings at our meeting next Monday.”  “They said don’t be working this week and must of them are not in the island.” 😞  “Do you ask if do you can coming and sure what not, but the government change the holidays for this week. Let me see if have some teacher here at the island to do some meetings.”

Table 12 (continued)

Method of Communication	My Messages	The Response
WhatsApp conversation 3: Local contact, July 12, 2017	<p data-bbox="646 380 1003 464">“Can you get the list of teachers and principals to me today or tomorrow?”</p> <p data-bbox="646 562 948 588">“Can you call or text them?”</p> <p data-bbox="646 686 1003 800">“Ok, the document that lists the participants does not need to be signed. Can you just email the directors?”</p>	<p data-bbox="1036 470 1386 554">“For this need go to them school and I no have gas for that. Help me in this please.”</p> <p data-bbox="1036 596 1386 680">“I’m need to go different place in the island to get this sign and participate names.”</p>
Email exchange with the director of Bay Island School: April 24, 2017	<p data-bbox="646 842 1003 1297">“¡Hola! How are you, my friend? I love receiving your messages [in Spanish]! I am writing up the data for my research. I have to explain how the teachers were chosen to participate in the seminar at Bay Island School. Can you please tell me how you chose the teachers to attend the seminar? Do you know how Prof. Alex chose his teachers? I have to be able to describe in detail how they were chosen. Thank you!”</p>	<p data-bbox="1036 1289 1386 1801">“Hi my Friend. The teachers were chosen on the criteria of responsibility, dedication and commitment, as well as academic preparation and experience which would facilitate them to acquire the new knowledge received in the seminary, and that would empower them to effectively multiply the strategies learnt to the other teachers in their schools; hence they must also be very proactive because they would have to put what they learned into practice in their classrooms.”</p>

Table 12 (continued)

Method of Communication	My Messages	The Response
WhatsApp message with pictures of students MakingWords: November 3, 2016	"I love this!"	"My students forming words. I love that technique."  "It's a little difficult for me because my student are 30, but they love to make words"

Another instance of difficulty in confirming dates and times and obtaining information was described in the previous theme; hosting the dinner for the directors. Additionally, it was very difficult to obtain information from the directors. I requested an interview and emailed the interview questions, in Spanish, to the directors in advance. Scheduling an interview was difficult due to our different schedules, lack of an available translator, and their additional work schedules. The directors and assistant directors each work a half day. Due to this schedule, many of them had more than one job. One assistant director was a lawyer and also worked as a local television news anchor. One of the directors worked a second job as the director of a private school. Consequently, I asked if they could write their responses to the interview questions and email them back to me. It took almost a month (three email reminders and two in-person visits) to get one of the directors to send me the answers. The difficulty of communicating with the directors led to the next result: my assumptions about communicating with and among schools was false.

From my experience as a school district employee, I made assumptions about communication structures in place at public schools. When I arrived at the first school in Honduras, I learned that there were no school secretaries, phones, websites, or emails. The only way to contact a school director was via a personal cell phone number or

personal email. These numbers and addresses were not published, which made it difficult to contact the schools. Also, I made assumptions about the sharing of information between schools and among staff. I assumed that the directors would have shared information about the seminar for which they volunteered their teachers. The teachers at both schools did not appear to know much about the seminar.

Another result is I discovered that email was not a viable tool to communicate with teacher participants. During the seminar, each participant indicated that they would be willing to complete a reflection and email me comments and questions. Over a period of several days, I collected an email address from each participant. None of the participants emailed me a reflection or questions and comments. I received a hardcopy of a reflection from one of the participants. I later discovered that email was not regularly used by the participants. However, the lack of email use may not have been the only issue.

Communication with the participants was difficult when not physically present in the community. While in the country, I communicated with the participants via a group message in an application called WhatsApp. I received several messages daily. Examples of typical messages on WhatsApp include:

- *Ese es el libro que usabamos en lecto escritura.* (That is the book that we used in reading lecture.) (Teresa)
- *Profa Teresa la estuve llamando porque Miss Tiffany quería comunicarse con usted pero fue ya días.* (Teresa, I was calling because Miss Tiffany wanted to communicate with you, but it was days ago.) (a director)

When I returned to the U.S., the messages dropped off to one or two messages a week, and then eventually no messages. Physical presence in the country appeared to influence the frequency of communication.

One of the most significant issues regarding communication was the language barrier. Out of the six teacher participants, one teacher spoke a little English. One school director was partially fluent in English, while the other director did not speak or understand English. This meant that most communication needed to go through a translator. My communication with the participants was largely limited to our time during the seminar when a translator was present.

In summary, I addressed communication in the following categories: with administrators, with participants, among staff, and with a local contact. Communication was one of the most difficult issues to address and effective communication was vital for creating and implementing a professional development program.

### **Summary of Results for Research Question 1**

I have described the process I utilized for creating a revised process flowchart and its efficacy as a tool for creating and implementing an asset-driven model professional development program with self-selected literacy content. I created the process for developing a professional development program from a synthesis of research on professional development models and teacher growth, theoretical perspectives, observations, and data analysis. Results indicated that four themes emerged from the data: (a) addressing the three ecologies of knowing is crucial, (b) the revised process flowchart is an effective tool, (c) flexibility is necessary for this context, and (d) effective communication is vital and challenging.

## **Question 2: Attaining a Balance**

Results for the second question indicated that the process for achieving a balance among current practices and beliefs, identifying self-selected content, and incorporating both with known best practices was effective. Moreover, attempts to implement new strategies may be affected more by a lack of material resources than by teacher beliefs or current practices. Results also indicated that in a developing country, other factors may influence the effectiveness of implementing new practices from professional development program.

Results on attaining a balance among current teacher practice, self-selected literacy content, and known best practices were derived from the following data sources: the Teacher Belief and Practice Surveys, Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, observations, and interviews. Through progressive focusing, I address the second research question by examining the data from a broad context and then focusing on specific participant results.

Data revealed that the way a balance is to identify current practices, identify self-selected content, and incorporate both with known best practices. These three processes formed the foundation for creating a balance among the components. Results are presented that demonstrate a balance was achieved and evidence to contradict results is discussed. Indications that a balance was achieved is demonstrated by the positive response regarding the self-selection of content, a comparison of results from both Teacher Beliefs and Practices Surveys, and the end of seminar evaluation.

### **Self-selected Content was Incorporated Successfully**

Data for this process were derived from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The data were analyzed from the aggregate broad perspective and then disaggregated to analyze at the individual level. Data revealed that the top identified self-selected content areas were phonics, comprehension, helping struggling readers, and motivating students/teaching skills.

On the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, the participants were asked to rate the five components of reading (phonics, phonemic awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) by marking their top two choices. Phonics was the top choice for every participant. The components of fluency, comprehension, and phonemic awareness each received two responses.

On another question, the participants were asked to identify their areas of interest from a list of 13 possibilities, by marking an area of interest with one X and areas of high interest with two Xs. The following items received the most marks: improving student comprehension (5 marks), helping struggling readers (4 marks), and motivate and teach skills (4 marks). The reading/writing connection received three responses and was included at my discretion as a valuable teaching concept and for alignment with the literacy processing theory. I addressed the reading/writing connection through the use of mentor texts and modeled writing.

Then, I charted the data for each participant to ensure that each teacher had at least one of their top two content choices included and 55% or more of their top areas of interest included. In seeking evidence to contradict these results, I reviewed the



individual response profiles. Three teachers chose “comprehending nonfiction text,” and two teachers chose “strategies for moving through progressively difficult text.” Those topics were not covered in the seminar; however, each teacher had more than 50% of their self-selected content addressed. Additionally, I reviewed the survey for evidence of the opportunity for teachers to provide their own content ideas in an open-ended format. One of the last items on the survey asked participants for questions or comments, but did not explicitly ask them for content ideas.

Responses from the participants indicate that I incorporated self-selected successfully.

*Todos los temas que se dieron en la capacitación fueron de mucha importancia y nos ayudaron en nuestra labor educativa con aquellos niños que necesitan lectura y escritura. (All of the subjects that were given in the training were of great importance and they helped us in our educational work with those children who need reading and writing) (Lucia)*

*Si fue una ventaja porque fueron técnicas o temas de suma importancia para el desarrollo en la lecto-escritura en nuestra niñez que so el futuro del mañana. (It [self-selected content] was an advantage because they were techniques of utmost importance for development in reading and writing.) (Ruth)*

*Todos los temas fueron importantes para mí, disfruté y aprendí mucho de todos, especialmente como ayudar a los niños con problemas de lectura y escritura. (All of the topics were important to me. I enjoyed it and learned a lot from everyone, especially how to help children with reading and writing problems). (Jenny)*

### **Comparison of Results**

I administered the first TBPS during the second day of the seminar. The survey asked participants to respond to questions about their current practices and beliefs. I scored the responses, and the participant was rated as having current practices that most align with a traditional teacher, an eclectic teacher, or a constructivist teacher.

Approximately a month later, I administered the second survey at the end of the

observation period. At the end of the seminar, each participant completed an evaluation of the seminar content and implementation. I also used comments from the evaluation and final interview for this question.

Results from the first TBPS generated the findings that five of the six teachers scored as having practices which align with a traditional teacher and one scored as eclectic. The second TBPS showed that two teachers scored as traditional, three scored as eclectic, and one scored as constructivist (Table 13). The results from the initial survey indicated that five of the teacher participants had similar perceptions of their teaching practices and beliefs. The range of scores was 15 points. The sixth participant scored as eclectic, which increased the range to 23. On the second survey, the range of the results was 30. However, there were some irregularities with the responses of one participant. This participant initially scored a 109 on the first survey. On the second survey, the participant answered each item with “sí” or “no” on each item, instead of a Likert Scale number. When I returned in March, I brought her survey back so that she could answer the questions with the correct mode of response. She answered every question with the highest number on the Likert Scale, which does not correspond to her original answers. For a correspondence, I would have expected the original answers to be mostly “sí” or “no”, rather than a combination of both answers. The results indicated a 26-point increase from the first survey to the second survey, scoring her as a solid constructivist teacher. The other participants averaged an 8-point increase. Additionally, my observations of her teaching practices did not align with constructivist practices. Due to these irregularities, I considered the results minus the outlier. The range of the results for the second survey was 16 points for the remaining five participants. The results indicated that most of the

teachers increased their scores and moved toward the constructivist side of the continuum. Therefore, their perception of their beliefs and teaching practices had changed. One teacher scored the exact same on both surveys. I observed her teaching on several occasions where she incorporated some of the new strategies.

Table 13

*Comparison of Data on TBPS*

Name	TBPS 1	TBPS 2	Difference
Ruth	110/Traditional	118/Eclectic	+8.0
Amelia	95/ Traditional	110/Traditional	+15.0
Teresa	109/Traditional	135/Constructivist	+26.0
Carol	105/Traditional	105/Traditional	0.0
Jenny	105/Traditional	121/Eclectic	+16.0
Lucia	118/Eclectic	120/Eclectic	+2.0

*Note.* 90-110 = traditional teacher; 110-125 = eclectic teacher; and 125-145 = constructivist teacher

For the purposes of this survey, Powers et al. (2006, pp 153-154) defined the types of teachers as follows:

## Traditional teacher

- uses traditional teaching methods such as basal reading instruction
- teaches using primarily direct instruction
- thinks about students as being “blank slates”

## Eclectic teacher

- uses some traditional and some constructivist reading methods
- uses conflicting instructional methods
- unsure about how students learn

#### Constructivist teacher

- uses primarily an integrated curriculum
- practices holistic instruction
- views students as using prior knowledge to construct meaning

Results from my observational field notes confirmed the practice of traditional, whole-group instruction. The same material was taught to all the students, and I did not observe differentiation in any of the classes. In an attempt to seek evidence to contradict the results, I reviewed the observational field notes and photographs from classroom visits. All of the data confirmed the results from the survey for the five teachers who scored in the traditional range. In contradiction to the “eclectic” result, the sixth teacher was also observed engaging in traditional teaching practices.

Data were collected on current practices from the TBPS, the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey, and observational field notes. Results indicated that most of the teachers employed traditional teaching practices. Seeking evidence to contradict the results confirmed that the five teachers who initially scored in the traditional range were teaching with traditional methods. The end results of the TBPS indicate that after the seminar, most of the teachers experienced movement in their perception of their beliefs and practices. An effective program is a balance program, and these results suggest that the seminar was effective and achieved a balance among current beliefs and practices, self-selected content, and known best practices.

To summarize, I successfully incorporated self-selected content into the seminar. These data were collected from the Assets and Needs Assessment Survey. The data were analyzed from a whole-group and individual perspective to ensure that the needs of the participants were met. Several teachers did not have all their self-selected content addressed, but all teachers had more than 50% of their chosen content addressed.

## Evaluation Results

Each participant and one non-participant teacher completed an evaluation of the seminar. Each item was rated on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being extremely useful.

Results indicated that scores for the content of the seminar were high, with all content scored as *useful* or *extremely useful* (see Table 14).

Table 14

### *End of Seminar Evaluation*

Evaluation	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3	Teacher 4	Teacher 5	Teacher 6	Teacher 7	Total
Change process	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	33
CoP	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Read aloud	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Shared reading	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Modeled writing	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	35
Reader's Theater	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	33
Individual Totals	30	30	30	30	30	28	28	

Note: Each item rated on a scale from 1-5 (1 = not useful, 5 = extremely useful).

Hay muchos cambios que nosotros no sabemos, pero sé que por mis propios medios intente hacer pequeños cosas o técnicas y usted con esta capacitación me confirma que hacia una fuerza positiva.” (There are many modifications that we don't know, but I know that for me personally, I seek to implement small things or techniques. In this regard, your trainings make it clear to me that we are moving forward in a positive direction)

### **Validity Concerns and Evidence to Contradict Results**

The evaluation was intended as an anonymous data collection tool; however, two participants signed their name to the evaluation. Additionally, the extremely high scores warranted a closer look at the data for factors that may have influenced participant

response. The data revealed that participants expressed gratitude for the seminar opportunity and wrote gracious responses throughout the project. For the open-ended response on the evaluation, seven instances of an unsolicited expression of gratitude were noted. This stance of gratitude may contradict results on the evaluation.

However, in follow-up interviews which occurred five months after the seminar, all four teachers who were interviewed named a specific strategy or activity from the seminar that they were currently using. Two participants were unavailable for interviews.

In summary, the data revealed very positive results for the evaluation at the end of the seminar. Additional data revealed a possible reason for the high results. Data also revealed that four participants reported they were currently using strategies or activities from the seminar, which supports a positive response on the evaluation.

### **Summary of Results for Research Question 2**

Achieving a balance among current teacher practices, self-selected content, and known best practices involves three processes. Data indicated that the processes were successful in achieving a balance among current teacher practices and beliefs, self-selected content, and known best practices. There were additional considerations for the selection of professional development content, such as available materials and policy constraints.

Data from an evaluation of the seminar were presented and revealed very positive results. Additional data which revealed a possible reason for the high results were discussed. Data also revealed that four participants reported that they were currently using strategies or activities from the seminar, which supports a positive response on the evaluation. I sought evidence to contradict the results for each of the processes.

## Chapter Summary

The purpose of this study was to identify a process for creating and implementing a specific professional development program and to understand how a balance is attained among several components. The context of the study was in a developing country, and the case consisted of six public school teachers. This qualitative study employed a descriptive case study design.

The results were reported in this chapter for two research questions and were summarized. Research Question 1 addressed the process utilized for creating an asset-driven model professional development program with self-selected literacy content and the process for implementing the program. Four themes emerged from the data: (a) addressing the three ecologies of knowing is crucial, (b) revised process flowchart is an effective tool, (c) flexibility is required for this context, and (d) communication is a vital and difficult part of the process and implementation.

Creating a process involves research, observation, a synthesis of information from a variety of sources, and a continual loop of testing and adjusting. Implementing a process involves an additional set of steps, yet overlaps with the continual loop of testing and adjusting. To answer the question, “What is a process for creating and implementing a professional development program?” I reviewed and evaluated the steps for creating the professional development, noted areas for improvement, analyzed data, and finally, evaluated the process itself.

Research Question 2 addressed achieving a balance among current teacher practices, self-selected content, and known best practices and involves three processes. Data indicated that the processes were successful in achieving a balance among current

teacher practices and beliefs, self-selected content, and known best practices. The end of seminar evaluation revealed positive results. Additional data which revealed a possible reason for the high results were discussed. Data also revealed that four participants reported that they were currently using strategies or activities from the seminar, which supports a positive response on the evaluation. Data supporting and challenging the findings were discussed.

In conclusion, the results from the study indicated that focusing on critical theory aspects is important, the revised process flowchart is an effective tool, flexibility is required in this context, and communication is an important and challenging component. Additionally, results indicated that achieving a balance among current teacher practices, self-selected content, and best practices is feasible when particular processes are followed. The process utilized for achieving a balance among current practices, self-selected content, and known best practices was successful.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of the research was to understand the process of creating and implementing a specific professional development program, to better understand the compatibility between professional development and current practices, and to observe how teachers identify and express their beliefs throughout this process. I generated the purpose from the problem of limited access to professional development opportunities for teachers in developing countries. The results for Research Question 1 revealed the importance of critical theory components in creating and implementing a program in a developing country and a more complicated process than the initial plan that I first envisioned. Additionally, implementing the program required a great deal of flexibility and communication was a more difficult issue to deal with than I realized.

Results for Research Question 2 indicated that achieving a balance among current teacher practices, self-selected content, and known best practices involves three processes. The processes are identifying current practices, identifying self-selected content, and incorporating the components of current teacher practices and self-selected content with best practices. I considered additional challenges regarding the selection of professional development content, such as available materials and policy constraints.

From my experience in creating and implementing a professional development program in a developing country, I learned that the main emphasis should focus on more

than procedures and processes. The relational and affective aspects of the project played an important role in successful implementation and how the program moved forward.

For epistemological reasons, I initially focused on social constructivism to anchor the development of this research project. However, if I were to plan another program in a similar context, I would anchor the project with critical theory perspectives and then focus on the social constructivist aspects of learning. While I included those components in my program, I think that establishing critical theory components as the centerpiece would have been even more effective in moving the program forward.

Reflecting on the results and the process of gathering data from the participants, it is clear to me why the central concept of the CLE theory of change is building relationships. Initially, out of respect for their time and space, I was cautious in my approach with the participants. After a relationship was established, I felt more comfortable asking questions and engaging the participants in conversation. The developing relationships enabled me to learn more of each participant's story.

Focusing on the priority of establishing relationships from the beginning (as opposed to data collection and creating the professional development content) could have resulted in more in-depth conversations with the teacher participants about their concerns earlier. For example, during a follow-up visit in March, some of the teachers asked me about challenges with specific students. Perhaps these frank discussions could have occurred in October or November if the relationships had developed sooner. The authors of *Reframing Community Partnerships in Education: Using the Power of Place and Wisdom of People* advise, 'interact with the intention of building relationships first, and

engaging in learning tasks after those relationships are first honored” (Guajardo, et al., 2016, p. 68)

Moving forward, I will establish the three ecologies of knowing, which are self, community, and organization, (Guajardo, et al., 2016) as the foundation on which to build a program. For future projects, participants will be encouraged to understand their own stories just as they were in this project, but I will place more emphasis on understanding the stories of community and organization. For this project, understanding the stories of the community and organization came through piecing together fragments of information and was not adequately developed until the end.

Through this experience, I discovered a group of educators who were dedicated to providing the best education possible, despite a lack of basic materials or the security of a timely paycheck. The teachers and administrators worked in conditions that many would find difficult: hot, humid classrooms that were dusty or muddy, depending on the season, a lack of clean and fully functioning toilet facilities, and virtually no support staff. The teachers also functioned as janitors, nurses, school secretaries, and counselors. Yet, they continued to show up and approach new strategies with eagerness and determination. Each of the teacher participants expressed the same goal: they wanted all their students to be able to read and write proficiently. They are doing a wonderful job with their students, but with a few supplies and a little support, they could come closer to achieving their goals.

On my last visit, one of the teachers asked for help with a student who was continually off-task. Unable to read or write, this child was not engaged in many of the classroom activities. I brought out a simple paper book and began to read to him and then

we read together. By the end of our time together, the child's demeanor had completely changed. He was engaged, interested, and excited to be participating in "school." I gave him the little paper book to keep, and the smile that swept across his face is an image that I will not forget. This was the first time the child had access to a text that was on his level. Just a few supplies and a little support can have a big impact. This example illustrates one of the reasons why this work is so important.

### **Limitations of the study**

I made a substantial effort to enhance the trustworthiness, validity, and credibility of this study; however, this study does have limitations. The initial selection of participating schools was made by the school directors, and they chose teachers from their school considered to be model teachers. My selection from the initial list provided by the directors was made primarily for reasons of accommodating communities of practice; therefore, the participants may not represent a typical group of primary teachers in this area. Due to the participant selection process, some results are not generalizable.

The nature of qualitative research involves a subjective paradigm and, although "subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 45), subjectivity can lead to misinterpretation. Misinterpretations can "occur because of a weakness in methods that fail to purge misinterpretations" (Stake, 1995, p. 45). To minimize this risk, I established routines for triangulation of the data, which included member checks when possible.

Researcher bias is a concern, given my role as a participant-observer. The routines for triangulation helped to guard against bias, and the practice of seeking evidence to contradict my findings provided another perspective in the interpretation of the data.

Also, all interviews were transcribed from the translator and not the participants. Nuances of meaning may have been lost in translation. Member checks were conducted to confirm the content of interview responses.

### **Problems Arising During the Research**

One of the most challenging aspects of this research project was the complexity involved in designing a university approved study, creating a professional development program, conducting research while delivering a professional development program, and moving to another country for over a month. Each component required immense time and planning. There were times when one component would become a lower priority due to the urgent requirements of another component.

The research project would have benefitted from more time in the classrooms at the end of the Honduran school year and on my final visit. Data collection on the visit at the end of the school year was difficult due to the end-of-year celebrations. It was difficult to hear participant responses for the interviews, parents were coming in the classrooms with food for the celebration, the students were very excited, and I felt rushed so that the teachers could return to supervising the excited students and to join in on the celebrating.

The last problem was the failure of one data collection tool. I anticipated receiving a reflection on teaching practices each week from each participant, for a total of 18 reflections. I received only one. Two mistakes contributed to this failure. First, the concept and language of the reflective process was foreign, just as it was to teachers in the United States before the 1990s. I should have incorporated more opportunities to construct knowledge around this concept and practice. Second, I chose the method of

delivery as email. At the beginning of the seminar, I asked the participants if they would be willing to email me the reflections. They all agreed, but I found out later that they did not typically use email. Instead of imposing my chosen method of delivery and asking them to comply, I should have asked, “How or what do you use to communicate digitally?”

### **Interpretation of the Results**

One of the largest areas of data collection for this study involved the process of creating and implementing a professional development program. Interpreting the results of the data regarding this process resulted in a process flowchart, and further interpretation resulted in a revised flowchart. These results are important because they provide a perspective of a professional development process in a non-Western country. As indicated in the review of literature, most of the research regarding professional development was conducted in Western contexts. Moreover, the results address the problem of access to professional development opportunities in developing countries. The flowchart demonstrates one way to create a professional development program and may encourage other educators to pursue similar projects. Facing a blank page can be daunting, but revising an existing text may not be as intimidating. The revised flowchart can provide a starting point for others who are interested in this topic.

The TBPS was a significant data collection piece for this study. The results from the survey are displayed in Table 9. Five of the six teachers increased their score from the first TBPS to the second, which indicates the possibility of movement in beliefs or practices towards eclectic or constructivist tendencies. Another possibility is that the scores indicate that their perception of their beliefs and practices had changed.

Determining if change occurred is difficult, and Korthagen (2007) reminded us that “experts tend to overlook the fact that human change can take many forms and that teachers may change in ways that are unexpected or not immediately visible to an outsider (p. 310). Bullough (1997) contends that significant learning results for teachers may be “personal, idiosyncratic, and probably not measurable.” (Bullough & Kauchak, 1997, p. 21). However, the results indicate that the possibility of change, or perceived change, is possible. Most of the teachers increased their scores on the survey, my observations confirmed that most of the teachers were attempting to incorporate new practices, and all the teachers indicated an interest in continued support.

These results are compelling because they indicate the possibility of change in a relatively short period of time. Yet, the most compelling result to me is the eagerness with which the teacher participants approached the idea of an additional seminar. Whether their practices have truly changed or not, they are open to learning more.

### **Implications of the Results**

My study offers suggestive evidence for an established process to create an asset-driven professional development program based on self-selected content. I discussed the creation of a second process flowchart and the changes that were incorporated. The study appears to support the argument for change in professional development models. I discussed an adapted version of a professional development model that incorporates components which align with critical theory and social constructivist perspectives.

I created a process flowchart from the actual and anticipated process that occurred. As I interpreted the results, it became clear that revisions to the process flowchart would result in a more effective process. Steps were added to the process that

allowed for a deeper understanding of the educational structures in place and to build relationships. These are important considerations for educators who wish to do work in a foreign educational system. This revised template can serve as a blueprint for creating and implementing a professional development program.

Upon further interpretation of the data and my experience, I realized that an additional adaptation was needed in the professional development model. To accurately reflect the process, the external sources of information in the external domain needed to incorporate the opportunity to build relationships, support self-selection of content, and integrate an asset-driven component. As a result, I made adaptations to the model and created a new version. This version is the Third Space Inclusive Professional Development Model (see Figure 9). This model is important because it acknowledges and incorporates important concepts from critical theory and supports a social constructivist perspective of learning. Professional development models discussed earlier focus on teacher learning and action; however, the importance of the cultural and social aspects of learning are not recognized. The Third Space Inclusive Professional Development Model places relationships, self-selected content, and an asset-driven model in a place of prominence in the creation of professional development content. In this model, the personal domain and the external domain overlap because beliefs, knowledge, and attitude influence the selection of content. Also, the professional development content is created with respect to the influences of various ecological systems. Recognizing the system of influences at the professional development content level acknowledges that these influences affect all domains. On the figure of the model, the concentric circle



around “PD Content” represents the influence of the mesosystem, or how all the systems interact.

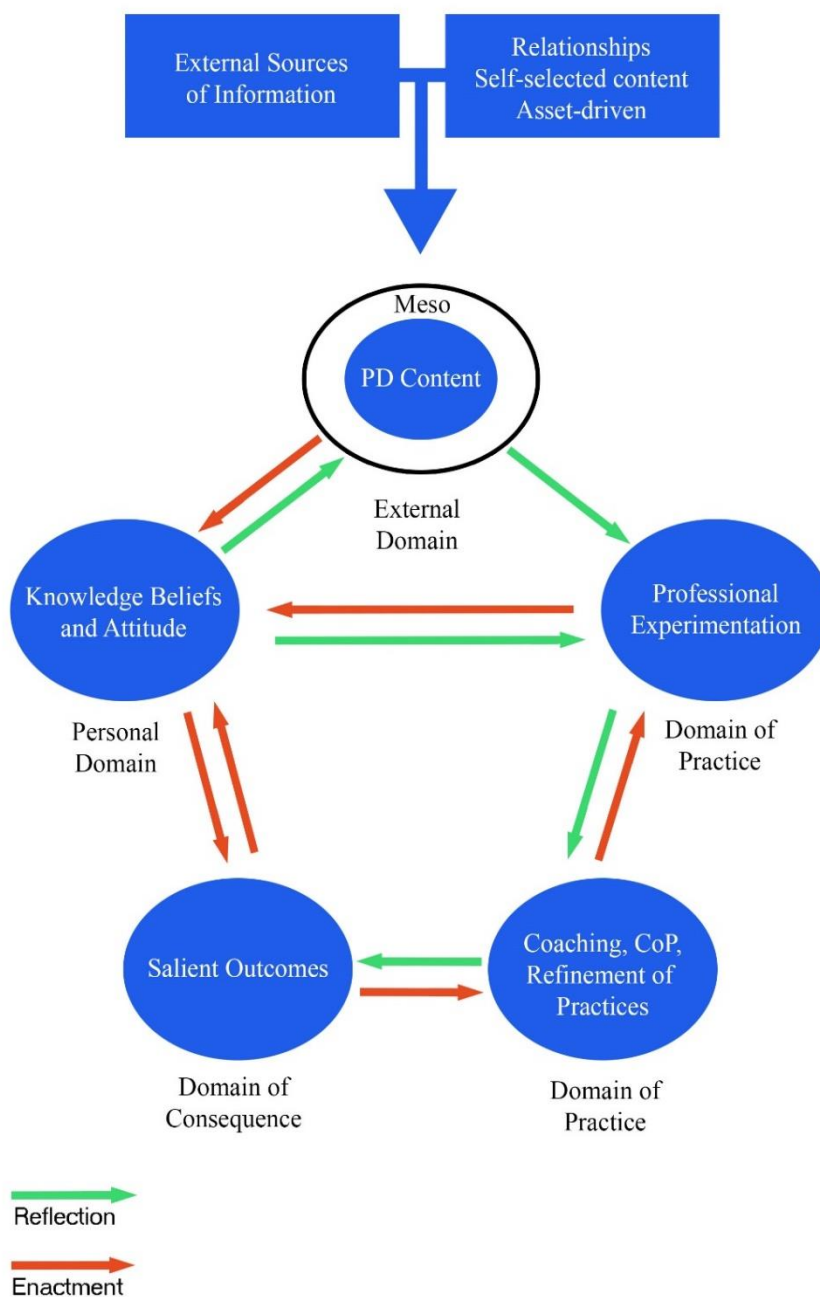


Figure 9. Third Space Inclusive Professional Development Model.

The name of the model comes from Oldenburg's (1991) concept of a third place, where home is the first place and work is the second place. Oldenburg (1991) described many characteristics of this third place, such as that the physical space is easily accessible, neutral, and inviting, where conversation is the main activity. The reason for naming the professional development model *Third Space* is a nod to many of these components in the metaphorical sense. The content should be accessible, involvement should be inviting, the environment should be neutral (power and authority are shared equally), and conversation should play an important role (as opposed to an expert lecturing on a topic). In addition to Oldenburg's Third Place (1991), the name alludes to Maniotes' (2005) literary third space defined as "where intellectual, literary, and social/emotional learning arose" (p. 1). This definition applies to students' literature discussions where "the students co-constructed knowledge and negotiated learning that extended outward from the traditional boundaries of school and crossed over to personal, community, and world issues (Maniotes, 2005, p. 1). This description of student engagement can apply to effective professional development. Rather than conducting discussions about literature, teacher participants would negotiate learning about instructional practices in connection with personal, community, and world issues.

Further implications for research involve the results regarding the need for flexibility before and during the seminar. Analyzing the data resulted in identifying continual adjustments as a prevalent occurrence, but interpreting the results led to far broader implications. Adjustments were made to the content of the seminar; however, the majority of the adjustments were made to the schedule. Many of these adjustments were due to cultural celebrations, community issues, and requirements from the government. In

reviewing the nature of these adjustments, it became clear that a systems approach to professional development was necessary in this setting. The participants did not construct meaning in isolation, but within a system impacted by an organization (government regulations) and a community (their school and the island community). Even if a professional development program is created from self-selected content and an asset-driven model, it is not enough. Professional development content is situated within a system, which will impact implementation of new strategies.

The constant need to change the schedule brought the issue of the impact of organization and community to the forefront. Almost immediately, I began to recognize other instances of the impact of organization and community, such as a high rate of absenteeism and a loss of instructional time. During my observations and through discussions with teachers, I learned that students typically receive 4 hours of instruction each school day, and those few hours are interrupted for holidays, assemblies, and unofficial time off. Consider a teacher who attends an excellent professional development seminar on literacy practices based on his or her needs and strengths, has coaching and peer support, and successfully implements new practices. These new practices will still be implemented within a system where students receive minimal instructional time and have frequent absences.

The literature on best practices in professional development is clear on the advantage of administrator support, and with the relatively predictable and homogenous educational structure of the public-school system in the United States, administrator support may be enough. The system, in this instance, may only extend to local influences. However, in different contexts, decisions that impact daily instruction may come from

sources of authority beyond the local school board or state regulations. Therefore, a systems theory approach, such as the CLE theory of change, may be the best option for professional development in other contexts.

Considered in conjunction with each other, I believe the results regarding communication and flexibility necessitate further interpretation to fully appreciate the implications. The combined results of these two themes underscore the importance of building a relationship before data are collected and continuing to develop the relationship. For example, Table 12 displays a conversation regarding the selection of teacher participants for the study. I first asked the question on June 26, 2016, and continued to ask the question of my local contact and the school director. After establishing a close relationship with a director, I asked the question again in April and received a thorough answer. In contrast, I had a tenuous relationship with my local contact that never evolved and eventually ended. I was never able to have substantive conversations or ask probing questions because the relationship did not develop.

Establishing a relationship with the directors or teacher participants before data collection could have produced a better outcome. Table 9 illustrates which scheduled events were adjusted. The first delay could have been avoided if I had established a relationship with the educators and continued to engage them in conversation. Frequent conversations could have informed me of government holidays and changes to published schedules. For example, I originally planned to observe the teacher participants through the month of November because the published schedule stated that the school term ended the last week of the month. Through conversations with the teacher participants, I learned that students attended only the first week of November.

### **Recommendations for Research**

Possible areas for further research investigation include a study with this professional development model that includes a measure of salient outcomes, a longitudinal study of CoP with a teacher leader taking over, and a replication of this study in the same location, but in different schools with the incorporation of more CLE components. My research interests for this location include follow-up inquiries into the status of the communities of practice after the study has ended, the sustainability of new practices, visiting the classrooms of the teacher participants a year later, how non-participants reacted to the professional development seminar, or comparing practices of non-participants to the study participants.

Salient outcomes are included in the Interconnected Model (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002) and the two models that I adapted. It is important to investigate whether the professional development program has an impact on salient outcomes for students. Therefore, a study which includes data collection on student achievement in relation to the professional development content could yield valuable information. I will continue my involvement with the schools in Honduras and support of the teachers for as long as they request support. Currently, I plan to return in the next six months to offer coaching and gather baseline data on student achievement.

Another area of importance is to study whether the CoP model can sustain learning with a local leader. Success is more likely when the local players are leading the efforts, and the CoP model may provide a vehicle for this leadership.

The replication of this study with the components of the CLE incorporated from the beginning may yield important information about effective models in this setting. More time would be allotted for building relationships and integrating participant stories.

This change may impact the effectiveness of the reflection piece and better support a coaching model.

The replication of this study at a different location, but within the same context, could yield important information regarding the process of creating professional development and attaining a balance by confirming my results or adding to the body of knowledge with additional findings. Applying the process from the revised process flowchart could yield valuable information about how the process needs to be adapted for different cultures or regions. Finally, one avenue for further study would be research into the specific ways that literacy instruction is impacted by forces beyond the control of the teachers, such as loss of instructional time and high absenteeism.

### **Contributions to Research**

This project looked at many components of creating professional development content with teachers in a developing country. Several contributions resulted from this effort. First, this project presents an account of applying professional development concepts created from research conducted in a Western setting to a context in a developing country. This account underscores the need for more professional development opportunities in countries, such as Honduras, and the need for professional development research conducted in these areas.

Second, my research resulted in a revised process flowchart. The steps in preparing for an asset-driven professional development seminar with self-selected content may help others to plan a similar project. The flowchart addresses international and cultural considerations. A similar context would be a relatively remote area in a

developing country where materials are scarce, a place with language differences, a small number of teacher participants, and limited professional development opportunities.

Finally, my efforts synthesized components from community development models and aspects of critical theory to create a professional development program. Community development perspectives and thoughtful consideration of possibly marginalized voices may be beneficial to professional development efforts in developing countries. Integrating these components is not only applicable in the context of a developing country. Consideration of critical theory and asset-driven models can benefit educators who teach in communities with marginalized populations. Giving a voice to teachers who know the needs of the school community may be more beneficial than the imposition of content from an outside source with little connection or knowledge of the local community.

This synthesis resulted in the adapted professional development model presented in Figure 3. This model allows for an integrated social constructivist perspective by incorporating coaching, communities of practice, and the opportunity to reflect and refine practice. The incorporation of these components could impact how professional development is created and delivered .

### **Autobiographical Reflection**

The process of creating a professional development program, collecting data, defending my proposal, and writing up the results provided many opportunities to reflect on my experiences and cognitive shifts that occurred during this process. My first significant experience occurred with a shift in language and resultant shift in thinking. Initially, I referred to the professional development program as “training.” From

conversations with my committee and personal reflection, I realized that the term “training” did not reflect social constructivist principles, nor the concepts of self-selected content or the asset-driven model. Although the term is used in the literature, I changed the term in my social language and writing to professional development seminar or program. I kept the word “training” when referring to another author’s work or when referring to the teacher participant’s prior professional development experiences.

With that shift in language, I noticed a shift in my conception from being a literacy expert sharing my knowledge to a facilitator supporting teacher-driven learning. As the character, John Keating, in *Dead Poet’s Society* said, “No matter what anybody tells you, words and ideas can change the world.” I began to understand the power of language.

The meaning in language was also reflected in the relationships between the participants and myself. The participants began addressing me as “Miss Tiffany.” I was uncomfortable with the linguistic implications because it felt like this language was establishing me as an authority figure. I explained that there was no need to address me as “Miss.” However, it was what the teachers felt comfortable calling me, and it was difficult for them to change the language used in addressing me. They began correcting themselves, and I realized that I created a situation where they felt they were continually making a mistake. It was not my place to impose my preferences on how they addressed me. This was their community, and I needed to accept their cultural norms. Horton and Freire (1990) explained that “Without understanding the soul of the culture, we just invade the culture” (Horton & Freire, p. 131). It was my intention to be addressed as a



colleague, an equal--not an outsider. I recognized that it was not my choice to decide what label they used and how they chose to categorize our relationship.

It all comes back to relationships. As the relationships developed, I began to receive more inquiries from the teachers regarding specific instructional challenges. These honest conversations developed over time. On many occasions, the teachers expressed gratitude for my efforts. Comments on the surveys and seminar evaluations were overwhelmingly positive. It felt as if their gratitude for the instructional support may have impacted their responses.

I have plans to return to the schools and will continue my relationship with the teachers and directors. As the relationships evolve, I hope that the participants will feel more comfortable expressing concerns and needs. This experience has enriched my life professionally, academically, and personally. My concepts of what professional development is and should be have expanded as well as my understanding of the importance of a critical theory approach. I was humbled and honored to share my thinking with the dedicated teachers on the island. They continue to inspire me and I cherish the relationships that developed during my stay (Figure 10). I will continue to develop those relationships. This research project is the beginning of a journey with the teachers of a small Caribbean island, and I plan to continue working with this community and other educational communities in Latin America.



*Figure 10.* Teacher participants.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: June 22, 2016

TO: Tiffany Regan  
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [901217-2] Identifying Teacher Beliefs and the Relationship to Best Practices to Create a Professional Development Program in Literacy Instruction in the Context of a Developing Country

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: June 22, 2016  
EXPIRATION DATE: June 22, 2017  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of June 22, 2017.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or [Sherry.May@unco.edu](mailto:Sherry.May@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.



**APPENDIX B**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION**  
**IN RESEARCH**

Project Title: Identifying Teacher Beliefs and the Relationship to Best Practices to Create  
a Professional Development Program in Literacy Instruction in the  
Context of a Developing Country  
Researcher: Tiffany Arnett Regan  
Phone: Email:

Purpose and Description: The primary purpose of this study is to examine teacher beliefs and their relationship to professional development in literacy. Preliminary data collection is necessary for the design of the study. An Asset and Needs Assessment Survey will be administered to all teacher participants and interviews will be conducted with the building principals. The data will be used to develop a professional training program for the teacher participants.

The survey will be delivered in person by the principal investigator to the teacher participants and consists of 22 questions. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete. You will be asked general information questions such as what grade you teach. You will also be asked questions about what kinds of support you currently receive and the type of training that you are interested in receiving. For the building principals, an interview will be conducted with the principal investigator. Principals will be given a copy of the interview questions before the interview. The interview content consists of 14 questions.

After the data has been collected, I will be happy to share the results with you at your request. I will take every precaution to protect your anonymity. I will not share your specific results with any local person. I will not use your name in any research report, publication, or presentation. Data collected and analyzed for this study will be kept in a locked cabinet in my home office, or on my personal password-protected computer, which are only accessible to me.

There is the potential risk of mild psychological discomfort while completing this survey because you will be asked about your professional knowledge of literacy. For principals, you will be asked about the strengths of your school and potential challenges with implementing the program.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had the opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of the form will be given to you to retain for your future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact Sherry May, IRB Administrator, Office of Sponsored Programs, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

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Subject's Signature

Date

---

Researcher's Signature

Date

**APPENDIX C**  
**INITIAL INTERVIEW**

Initial Interview  
(Adapted from Collett, 2011; Achtem, 2010)

Tell me the story of your journey to becoming a teacher.

In your school, what influences your reading instruction?

Do you have opportunities at school to collaborate?

If so, please tell me about them.

When do you feel most confident as a teacher?

How much choice do you have about your reading instruction?

What are some of the benefits of instructing in a one-on-one setting?

How do you maximize student learning in your classroom? (learning)

How do you describe your role as a teacher? (knowledge)

How do you know when your students understand? (learning)

In the school setting, how do you decide what to teach and what not to teach?  
(knowledge)

How do you decide when to move on to a new topic in your classroom? (knowledge) 6.

How do you know when learning is occurring in your classroom? (learning)

Luft & Roehrig, 2007.

**APPENDIX D**  
**POST-CLASSROOM VISIT INTERVIEW**

Post-classroom Visit Interview  
(Adapted from Collett, 2011)

How did you design today's lesson? Whole group, small group or individual?

What was the objective of the lesson?

Did you make any changes to the lesson while you were teaching?

If yes, what did you notice that made you decide to change your plan?

How does this lesson compare to lessons before the seminar?

Do you think this lesson was successful?

What additional support, if any, would support you instructionally? More collaboration, coaching, training, feedback, etc.?

**APPENDIX E**

**END OF SEMINAR INTERVIEW**



End of Seminar Interview  
(Adapted from Collett, 2011)

Tell me about the approach to reading instruction in your classroom. How was it designed?

What factors do you take into consideration as you plan instruction?

What supports at school may help you put what you know into practice in your classroom?

What role does collaboration play in your instructional design?

Have you seen any benefit from collaboration, or the community of practice?

If so, in what ways have you benefitted?

What are some of the challenges of classroom instruction? How are you addressing these challenges?

What are some of the benefits of instructing in a whole group setting?

What are some of the benefits of instructing in a small group setting?

Do you sometimes choose to instruct in small groups?

What are some of the benefits of instructing one-on-one? Why do you sometimes choose to instruct individually?

Can you tell a story about a time when you made a connection between your classroom instruction and the seminar content?

In what ways has the professional development program influenced your beliefs or understandings about reading instruction – if at all?

What was your experience with the teacher reflection piece? Did this help your practice?

In what ways has your experience in the program affected your classroom practice – if at all?

**APPENDIX F**  
**FINAL INTERVIEW**

## Final Interview

Name\_\_\_\_\_Grade\_\_\_\_\_

Number of students\_\_\_\_\_ Boys\_\_\_ Girls\_\_\_ How many speak Spanish as their first language? How many speak English as their first language?

1. In our first interview, you told a little about how you became a teacher. You said,

---

Can you add to your story?

Follow-up questions: About what age were you when you first considered becoming a teacher?

What age were you when you firmly decided to become a teacher?

Where did you attend college to become a teacher (what city)?

What is the story telling method of teaching?

2. In our first interview, you said that you collaborated with your colleagues

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Has that changed or has it stayed the same?

When is the last time you met with your colleagues? What did you discuss?

Do you prefer to plan lessons with colleagues or by yourself? When trying new strategies or activities, do you prefer to plan by yourself or discuss it with a colleague?

3. Has your reading instruction (the way you teach reading and/or writing) changed this year compared to a year ago?

If yes, then how?

If no: Do you want to try new ways to teach reading and/or writing?

What support would you need?

4. I want to understand what it is like to be a teacher in Roatán. Can you describe your day from the time you wake up and get ready for work to the time you leave school?

Follow-up: How does each teacher get to and from school? When do you grade papers and plan lessons? Do you have to spend a lot of time outside of school planning or grading?

5. Tell me about some of your relationships:

Describe your relationship with your students:

Your director:

Parents:

Do you have a mentor or someone you go to for teaching advice?

6. Think about your daily experiences as a teacher (support from parents, director, other teachers, the training from the fall, etc.). Do you see your teaching practices expanding or evolving? What are some realistic expectations?

7. If you were to focus on integrating one new strategy into your teaching, which would you like to focus on? Shared reading, Read Aloud, Making Words, or another strategy?

What support would help you integrate this new strategy?

(For some, this answer may have been addressed in question 4).

8. Do you have anything to add? Questions or comments?

**APPENDIX G**  
**PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW**

Name

Date

How long have you been at this position at this school?

How long have you been a principal?

What are the strengths of the school community?

Staff?

Community?

District?

What are your strengths as a leader?

What does your staff most appreciate about you?

What is enjoyable about your job?

What assets in the community can you identify that might be interested in supplying volunteers or supplies to support literacy? Parents, churches, local businesses, etc.

Are there state/department/ district learning standards for reading and writing?

Who is responsible for choosing the reading materials and curriculum?



What are the teachers responsible for?

How involved in this program do you wish to be? What information would you like from me?

What goals do you have for the reading program in the primary grades at your school?

What challenges in reading writing (teaching or student achievement) do you wish to address?

As a part of the seminar, we will establish a community of practice, which is a group of teachers who can meet and discuss the content and how to make it work in their classrooms. The CoP is one way to continue the professional growth after I leave. Do you see any challenges or problems with continuing the CoP for the remainder of the year?

**APPENDIX H**  
**ASSETS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

This survey was created to collect information about your opinions on the need for professional development in the area of literacy. The survey will take about 10-15 minutes to complete and all of your responses will remain completely confidential.

Please feel free to continue your answers on page two or the back of page one if there is not enough room for your responses.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many years have you been teaching? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Please list the grades/levels you have taught and the number of years at each grade.
3. Please describe your teacher training experience. For example, did you attend college or other training classes, a certification/licensure program, on-the-job training, etc.?
4. Have you received any professional development in reading or literacy instruction since you have been a classroom teacher? \_\_\_\_\_ If yes, please describe
5. What grade do you currently teach? \_\_\_\_\_ How many students are in your class? \_\_\_\_  
What is the age range of students in your class? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Please describe your strongest areas as a teacher. What things do you do well?
7. What do your colleagues appreciate about you?
8. What are your strengths as a learner? How do you learn best?
9. What do you enjoy most about teaching?
10. What are your biggest challenges in teaching reading or writing?
11. Can you give a specific example of this challenge?
12. The National Reading Panel\* report identified five components of an effective reading program: phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Please rank these components in order from 1-5, with number 1 being the component you wish to have the most support/training; number 5 being the one that you desire the least support/training.
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

13. How do you assess the reading ability of your students? How do you know if they are ahead, behind, or right where they need to be?

Concepts of print (direction of print, reading top to bottom, letters make words, etc.) \_\_\_\_

Phonics/Word Recognition (learning the sound/symbol relationship) \_\_\_\_

Story structure of narrative (fiction) text \_\_\_\_

Teaching strategies for unknown words (what to do besides ‘sound it out’) \_\_\_\_

The reading/writing connection \_\_\_\_

Helping students progress through increasingly difficult text \_\_\_\_

Teaching vocabulary \_\_\_\_

Teaching phonemic awareness (hearing different sounds in words, blending sounds, segmenting sounds, etc.) \_\_\_\_

14. The following topics are a few examples of the type of choices available for the seminar content. Please place an X next to any item that you are interested in learning about. Mark as many as you like. Please place a double mark “XX” next to the item that *most* interests you.

Improving student comprehension \_\_\_\_

How to help struggling readers \_\_\_\_

Teaching the features of non-fiction (informational) text \_\_\_\_

15. How do you assess the reading ability of your students? How do you know if they are ahead, behind, or right where they need to be?

16. What kind of support do you have to help struggling readers?

17. What kind of support do you have to help advanced readers?

18. Tell me about what a day in your classroom during reading looks like. How much time in the schedule is allotted for reading and/or writing? What activities do you do? What materials do you use to teach? This is to help me build a program that works with the structure you already have in place. The more I know about how your instructional day looks, the better I can plan around how you currently teach.

19. What is one (or more) goals that you would like to achieve as a teacher of reading and writing?

20. Are any volunteers available to help during the time that you teach reading?

21. Please list any concerns or comments that were not covered by the survey. This professional development program will be created to be useful to you. Please include any information that will help me to meet your needs or goals.

22. Think about what you teach in reading and writing. What is important that your students understand over the next 40 days? What is important that they understand over the next 40 months? What is important that they understand over the next 40 years?

40 days

40 months

40 years

23. Please write one question that you have for me.

\*The National Reading Panel was commissioned by the United States Government in 1997 to review and assess effective practices in teaching children to read.

**APPENDIX I**  
**TEACHER BELIEF AND PRACTICES SURVEY**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please read about these two groups of teachers and choose which group that you most identify with.

The teachers at Star School regularly reflect on specific lessons with a colleague or peer by evaluating their teaching practices and that of other teachers. They think about how a specific lesson was taught and write their reflections in a journal or discuss the reflections with peers.

The teachers at Circle School do not have specifically scheduled times reflect on their teaching practices or the practices of other teachers. They may think about how a lesson was taught or occasionally discuss a specific lesson with a colleague or peer.

Do you identify with the Star School teachers or the Circle School teachers?

Is this description mostly true or somewhat true for you?

2. What is one (or more goals) that you have as a teacher of reading and writing?

3. Please read about these two groups of teachers and choose which group that you most identify with.

Teachers in the Blue Group have scheduled weekly meetings to collaborate and plan lessons, and to discuss challenges with student learning or teaching.

Teachers in the Red Group do not have scheduled meetings to plan lessons, but may discuss challenges with colleagues, the principal, or non-teaching peers.

Do you identify with the Blue Group teachers or the Red Group teachers?

Is this description mostly true or somewhat true for you?

Please read the following statements and circle the response that indicates your feelings or behaviors regarding literacy and literacy instruction.

4. The purpose of reading instruction is to teach children to recognize words and to pronounce them correctly.

Strongly Disagree  
Agree

Strongly

1-----2-----3-----4-----5

5. When students read text, I ask them questions such as “What does it mean?”

6. Reading and writing are unrelated processes.

7. Students should be treated as individual learners rather than as a group.

8. I schedule time every day for self-selected reading and writing experiences.

9. Students should use “fix-up strategies” such as reading when text meaning is unclear.

10. Teachers should read aloud to students on a daily basis.

11. I encourage my students to monitor their comprehension as they read.

12. I use a variety of pre-reading strategies with my students.

13. It is not necessary for students to write text on a daily basis.

14. Students should be encouraged to sound out all unknown words.

15. The purpose of reading is to understand print.



16. I hold parent workshops or send home newsletters with ideas about how parents can help their children with school.

17. I organize my classroom so that my students have an opportunity to write in at least one subject every day.

18. I ask the parents of my students to share their time, knowledge, and expertise in my classroom.

19. Writers in my classroom generally move through the processes of prewriting, drafting, and revising.

20. In my class, I organize reading, writing, speaking, and listening around key concepts.

21. Reading instruction should always be delivered to the whole class at the same time.

22. I teach using themes or integrated units.

23. Grouping for reading instruction should always be based on ability.

24. Subjects should be integrated across the curriculum.

25. I use a variety of grouping patterns to teach reading skills such as skill groups, interest groups, whole groups, and individual instruction.

26. Students need to write for a variety of purposes.

27. I take advantage of opportunities to learn about teaching by attending professional conferences and/or reading professional journals or books.

28. Parents' attitudes toward literacy affect my students' progress.
  
29. The major purpose of reading assessment is to determine a student's placement in the basal reader.
  
30. I assess my students' reading progress primarily by teacher-made and/or book tests.
  
31. Parental reading habits in the home affect their children's attitudes toward reading

**APPENDIX J**  
**TEACHER REFLECTIONS**

Name

Date

Please choose three or more questions to answer that best reflects your experience this week.

Did you integrate any new practices into your teaching this week?

If so, what?

Did you have the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues?

If so, briefly describe the topic.

What is something that went well in your literacy teaching?

What is something that you would like to change or improve next week?

How will you do that?

How is the change process going? Are you aware of what stage you are in?

Additional comments or insights

**APPENDIX K**  
**DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

What is one of the first vivid memories that you have of school?

Bring in 3-5 objects that help to tell your story.

What is one of the first vivid memories that you have of reading?

Describe one of your first teaching experiences.

**APPENDIX L**  
**MAINTAINING THE CoP**

Adapted from Wenger, 2000

Learning Energy	Social Capital	Self-Awareness
<p>Has the group identified a joint inquiry? Have members identified knowledge gaps? Do they work together to tackle these gaps?</p>	<p>Are there opportunities to develop trust? Are group members able to raise difficult issues?</p>	<p>What body of work has accumulated over time (lessons, assessments, discussions, etc.)? What future opportunities exist?</p>
<p>What is inspiring participation? Is there a learning agenda defined? How do the members envision their potential?</p>	<p>What do the members know about each other? What role does membership in this community play in their lives?</p>	<p>Is there an opportunity to reflect on the work of the CoP?</p>
<p>Do the members share a purpose? Have they articulated this? Do they feel accountable? Is there distributed leadership?</p>	<p>What shared commitments and expectations keep the community together?</p>	<p>Standards? Routines? Frameworks? How will these be passed on?</p>
Connectedness	Transparency	Negotiation
<p>Do you have meaningful conversations? Do members listen well? Do you keep commitments to the CoP? Do you give and receive feedback?</p>	<p>Are common goals and expectations clear enough so that differences can be acknowledged and discussed? Are there opportunities to observe and discuss each other's practices?</p>	<p>Are joint activities arranged in such a way that different perspectives can be appreciated?</p>



**APPENDIX M**  
**EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**  
**PROGRAM**

This evaluation will help me to improve the program. I appreciate your responses.

1. Do you feel you learned strategies or methods that will help you teach children to read and write?

Please rate each segment for how useful the information was to you.

Por favor, evalua cada segmento de esta capacitación. Me interesa mucho la utilidad de la información de cada segmento.

---

1	2	3	4	5
Not useful		más	útil	
Poco útil		o		Extremely useful
		Menos útil		Me va a ayudara
hacer mi trabajo mejor				

2. The change process \_\_\_\_

El proceso de cambio

3. Community of Practice \_\_\_\_

Comunidad de práctica

4. Read Aloud \_\_\_\_

Leer en voz alta

5. Shared Reading \_\_\_\_

Lectura compartida

6. Guided Writing \_\_\_\_

Escritura dirigida

7. Reader's Theater \_\_\_\_

Teatro de leer

8. Is there a segment that should have been shorter?

¿Hay un segmento que debería haber sido más corta?

9. Is there a segment that should have been longer?

¿Hay un segmento que debería haber sido más largo?

10. What would you change about the seminar?

¿Qué cambiaría de este entrenamiento?

11. Comments:

Otras comentarios

**APPENDIX N**  
**PROCESS FLOWCHART**

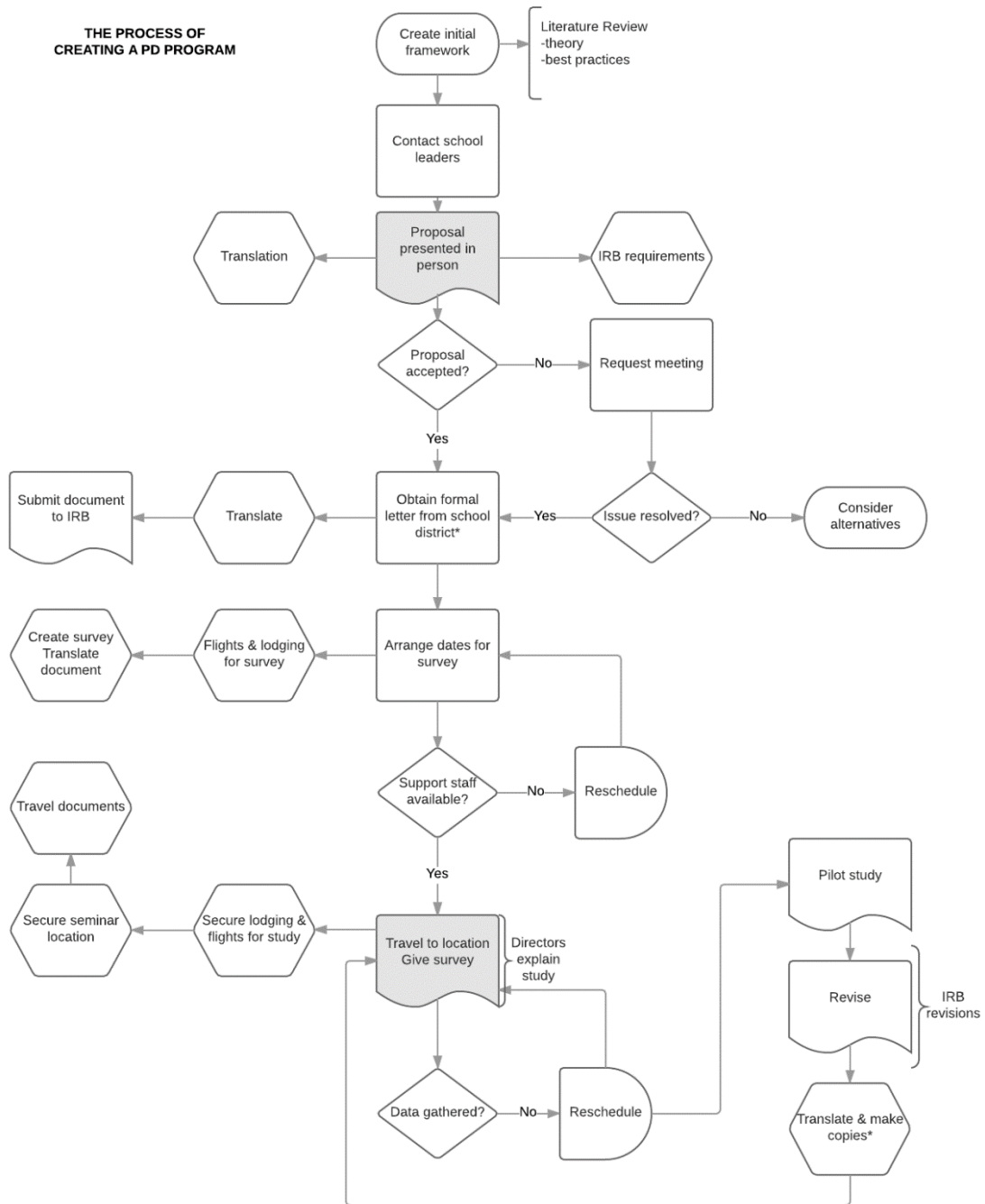


Figure 11. Process flowchart.

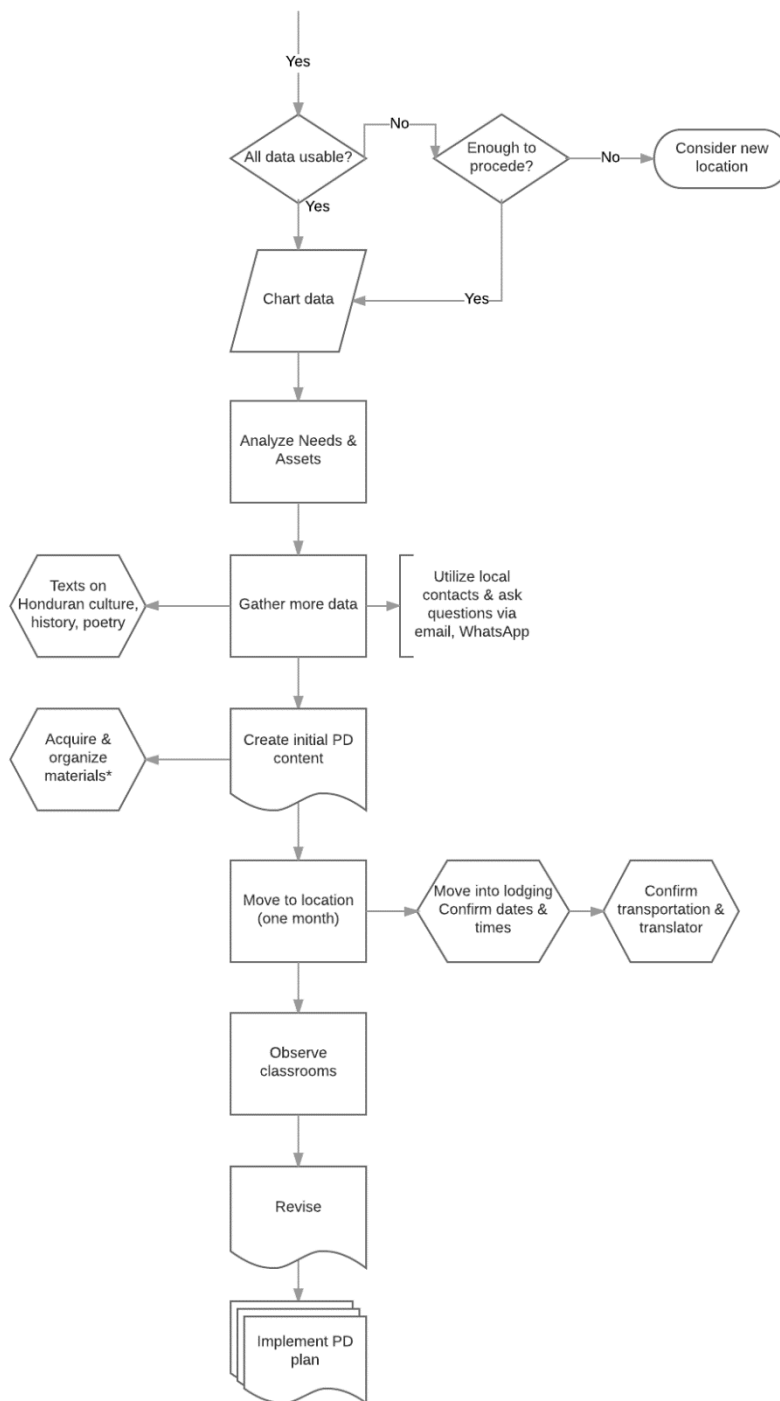


Figure 11, continued.

**APPENDIX O****THE FIVE AXIOMS OF THE CLE THEORY  
OF CHANGE**

The Five Axioms of the CLE Theory  
of Change  
(Guajardo, et al, 2016)

1. Learning and leadership are a dynamic social process.
2. Conversations are critical and central pedagogical processes.
3. The people closest to the issues are best situated to discover answers to local concerns.
4. Crossing boundaries enriches the development and educational process.
5. Hope and change are built on assets and dreams of locals and their communities.



**APPENDIX P**

**A DESCRIPTIVE CHRONOLOGICAL ACCOUNT**

The beginning. The process began by identifying relevant theories and models which could provide a foundation for creating a professional development program. Information from a focused research effort in several areas addressed in the literature review was used to create an initial framework on the theoretical foundation, for a professional development program. During this time, I was also searching for suitable locations to conduct research.

Once a prospective location was identified, I wrote a proposal of my research project and had it translated. I had direct access to an English-speaking director (principal) who presented my proposal at a director meeting. This research project would require many trips to the location and the decision was made not to make a trip to the island to present the proposal in person at the director meeting. The proposal was approved and I moved forward with the creation of an Assets and Needs Assessment Survey and obtaining approval to conduct the research.

A formal letter from the school district granting permission to conduct research was required to obtain IRB approval. The initial letter of permission from the superintendent of the island schools was emailed from a personal account because a district email account does not exist. Consequently, it took a little more effort to receive an official document from the school district granting permission.

The next step in the process involved several concurrent actions: continue working on the survey, gather as much information about the materials and methods used by the teachers, and schedule a time to administer the survey to the teachers. My contact, who was a director at a private Christian school, provided me with limited information

regarding how public school teachers taught literacy. Working together, we scheduled a time in June to administer the survey.

The island. After two days of travel, I caught my first glimpse of the tropical island as the jet touched down the runway and taxied parallel to the turquoise Caribbean Ocean. The tiny airport was situated between the ocean and the busy, winding main road of the island. I followed the deplaning passengers down narrow, metal stairs and into the small building hoping for relief from the sweltering heat and humidity. Dozens of passengers queued up for immigration. Almost an hour later, I made it to the immigration officer and was confronted with a bureaucratic dilemma. I was required to give the address of where I would be staying, however, there are no addresses on the island. Initially it looked as though I might be denied entry, but eventually I managed to pass through.

After arriving at the place where I was staying, I sent messages to my contact to arrange a time for the administration of the teacher survey. After two days of sending messages via WhatsApp, my contact finally responded and informed me that the teachers were on vacation for the week and unavailable. Consequently, the process was adjusted and I planned a return trip to the island.

Although frustrating and costly, this delay allowed time to conduct an online pilot study when I returned to the United States. The pilot study results produced a leaner, more concise survey.

The schools. I returned a few weeks later to administer the survey. Unfamiliar with the transportation system on the island, I arranged a private taxi with an English-speaking driver, to the first school. The school is not near a tourist area; therefore,

accommodations are not available near the school. Arriving at the first school, the taxi stopped in the middle of the road since there is no school parking lot or room to pull over. The school is a large, two-story concrete block building with rows of windows on each floor. The top floor is painted light tan and the bottom floor is painted a darker shade of tan and has black bars across all the windows. Letters posted above the entrance spell out the name of the school. A two-lane street in front of the school runs one-way and is packed with vehicles, mostly taxis, that must maneuver around the numerous cars parked on the street. The sidewalk bustles with busy local residents and small kiosks offering green mangoes or lychee fruit. Businesses such as banks, small shops, and eating establishments line the dusty street on either side of the school. Scrawny stray dogs cautiously scamper along the sidewalk, weaving in and out of families with children making their way to school.

I crossed the busy street and walked through the school's open metal gate, down a short cement corridor to a locked gate. Through the gate, I could see a large, open concrete square. Directly facing the gate on the far side of the square was a set of concrete stairs with no railing, about five feet high which provided access to a stage. On the right side of the square was a concession stand and wooden bleachers. On the left side of the square were two levels of classrooms and a wide wooden staircase.

An elderly man sat on a stool inside the locked gate. As I approached and greeted him, he nodded and unlocked the gate so I could enter. The school office was across the square on the second floor. I climbed the worn wooden stairs and made my way to the director's office. Passing by several classrooms, I saw wooden chairs with attached desks and children dressed in white and blue uniforms. The classrooms were built of concrete

blocks and had large windows. All of the classroom doors were open and each classroom also had a security gate of white metal bars that could be locked. Ceiling fans rotated feebly in each of the rooms. A slight breeze sporadically stirred the hot, sticky air.

The office had an opaque commercial glass door. I stepped in the small air-conditioned office and introduced myself to the director. The office had one desk with a computer and printer on top, a filing cabinet, and a television mounted high on the wall. Hanging by the door was a small, white medicine cabinet that was missing a door. The shelves were empty except for a small clear toothpick dispenser that was filled halfway with round, brown pills.

The director is the only staff member who occupies the office in the afternoon (from 1:30-5:30). An assistant principal uses the office for the morning schedule of students (7:30-12:30). There is not a secretary or any other support staff. The director does not speak English and summoned one of the African-Caribbean teachers to translate. She arrived and I confirmed that the director was expecting me. I asked if I could see the teachers and administer the survey. The teachers came into the office and I greeted each one, introduced myself and thanked them for participating. Each teacher was given a consent form in Spanish and asked to sign. Then they were given the survey. The teachers were very quiet and did not interact much or ask questions. I wrongly assumed that the director had spoken to the teachers about the project. The only context the teachers had for completing the survey was what I provided on the day it was administered. I thanked them for their participation and encouraged questions. However, they barely made eye contact with me and the situation felt awkward. I was relieved when each participant turned in the survey and left.

I repeated the process at the second school the next day. School 2 is smaller and located in a more remote area consisting mostly of residential buildings and a cruise port terminal. Built adjacent to the main road, which winds around the coast of a small bay, the unobstructed views of the ocean are visible from many parts of the school. The school entrance is separated from the road by a narrow shoulder and the nondescript, pink concrete building is difficult to find because there is no sign indicating that it is a school.

I entered the unlocked gate and made an immediate right into the director's office. The assistant director greeted me and sent for the teacher participants. The assistant director, who is also a lawyer and television news anchor for the local news, helped me with the consent forms and survey because he spoke fluent English. I was introduced to the teachers, one of whom spoke some English. Another teacher asked about observing a class in the U.S. and the third teacher did not speak or make eye contact with me unless I directly handed her an item, such as a pen.

After gathering the data from the participants, I returned to the U.S. and began to read through and analyze the data. Then I created tables from the data of the collective results and individual results in order to begin creating the content for the professional development seminar.