INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL: Approaches to Enhanced Accessibility for Learners With Special Educational Needs

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Foundation courses are a compulsory part of the curriculum at The University of the West Indies; servicing a range of faculties including the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences. This means that within the courses lie a mix of learners, learning styles and abilities. Despite this reality, teaching methods employed favour an approach in which the learner does not present with special needs. FOUN 1001 English for Academic Purposes is one example of these foundation courses done by a cross section of students across the Humanities and the Social Sciences, offered every semester both locally and regionally. The main objectives of this paper are to examine modes that have traditionally underpinned the teaching of foundation courses and move from there to consider pedagogical issues raised by Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction as two specific approaches that pinpoint areas in which avenues for creating a more inclusive learning environment within language teaching at the tertiary level can be conceived. Secondly, we suggest various modes of presentation which are useful for students with various types of exceptionalities. The following questions will guide the discussions. At the tertiary level, how have foundation courses been presented traditionally? What are the recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses so as to cater for exceptional individuals in the classroom? How can an evaluation of both approaches improve practice in tertiary level classrooms? Finally, discussions, recommendations and conclusions will be presented. One key recommendation points to targeted, specific teacher professional development underpinned by the use of readily available technology to enhance pedagogy.

“One telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research . . . is what a difference it makes to have a "problem" in one versus the other” (Bass, 1999, p. 1). Bass argues that having a problem in scholarship and research is at the heart of academic engagement whereas a problem in teaching is not to be embraced, a “fix”
is needed and must be sought after. Changing the discourse as Bass suggests, from remediation to scholarship requires a response to the following: “How might we make the problematization of teaching a matter of regular communal discourse? How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as problems to be investigated, analysed, represented, and debated?” (Bass, 1999, p. 1). Shulman (1998) in his discourse on course anatomy first posited that any activity that is branded scholarship should display three critical characteristics: “it should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one’s scholarly community” (para. 2). Teaching in the traditional sense is usually very private and conjures up images of the ‘sage on the stage’. Any comments and or questions by peers are often viewed with great suspicion and insular thoughts quickly emerge. Teaching as scholarship is then more desirable and should underpin all teaching at the tertiary level. Shulman argues that teaching as scholarship is a process which embodies five key elements: vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis.

Background

Course Anatomy
Shulman (1998) contends that courses are like organisms; each course has various parts and structures which have their own functions, but each part must work in tandem with other parts to achieve the course objectives and goals. FOUN 1001: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a semester long course offered at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Trinidad (The UWI). It is one of seven foundation courses available to first year students. Foundation courses on the whole attempt to provide entering students with basic skills important to writing and research at the tertiary level. EAP specifically targets the building of expository writing skills in terms of the basic organization and structure of an academic essay in relation to specific expository strategies such as analysis by division and classification for example, and research and documentation skills. The delivery of the course includes both face to face and online measures, a blended approach. It has quite a large range - servicing students of the Faculties of Humanities and Education and Social Sciences as well as other teaching and learning institutions throughout the Caribbean. The course in its present form makes basic assumptions about the target population. These include that in addition to possessing the entry level requirements which include a grade 1 in CXC English Language for example, it assumes that the typical student also possesses all the required
resources and abilities to function appropriately in a blended environment of face to face and online modes. In its present form delivery modes make little accommodation for students who may be hearing or visually impaired or suffer from common learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The University’s current policy requires that students who fall into this category, self-identify and make contact with the University’s Student Life and Development Department (SLDD) which can advocate on a student’s behalf. Services typically offered are limited and include requests for extra time on examinations, special venues, seating accommodation and counselling. None of these interventions address the issue of the design of course material. The reality though is that access to tertiary education through government initiatives such as Government Assistance for Tertiary Expenses (GATE) means that the level of diversity in the student population is gradually increasing and will have an impact on foundation or entry level courses which are compulsory for students. This means that there is need for the university as a whole to address the challenge of providing for a changing student population. There is therefore a growing imperative to consider the design of courses to ensure suitability for a range of students with diverse needs.

**Course in Present Format**

EAP as a course is notable for the ways in which it has been adjusted over time to reflect the needs of its students. University level writing courses first made their debut in the 1960s at The UWI. It was believed that students registered with the required competencies. The shortcomings in this assumption gradually saw a refining of focus with more emphasis being placed on grammar and specialization in specific expository modes (Milson-Whyte, 2008). In the 1990s there was a shift again from individual coursework formal essay examination as well as a final examination to a more developmental and collaborative process practiced today, where students work together to create outlines and then through a process of continuous feedback produce the complete essay moving through the stages of outline to body paragraph to complete essay. Students are supported along the way not only by tutors in small classes of no more than 20, but also through the provision of writing and grammar workshops which target specific problem areas in language. Students also have the benefit of accessing the University’s writing centre where writing coaches offer individual attention to participants. The Foundation Unit which has responsibility for delivering EAP and all its sister courses also offers a practice writing service where students can submit samples of their writing for evaluation and consultation.
The delivery of course content is facilitated through weekly two-hour plenary or lecture sessions and one-hour tutorial sessions. Students are required to attend one plenary session and one tutorial session each week. The course also contains an online component - myeLearning where students can complete self-paced independent exercises as well as view summarized PowerPoint presentations of lectures. The plenary sessions however are where the main content is delivered and the principles of the specific expository method are introduced. Lecture sessions are delivered in large halls typically with a seating capacity for 200-400 students. There is a fixed raised podium at the front which accommodates the screen on which multimedia projections will be shown, as well as the presenter’s podium and computer/laptop. Typically, a PowerPoint presentation is shown. Students can take notes and ask questions during the presentations. Seating is fixed in an amphitheatre type arrangement. If a student has a physical disability requiring wheelchair assistance there are ramps. These students are usually placed just under the podium to the front. If a student has a particular learning disability the situation becomes a little more complicated. Sight-impaired students for example must have their own specialized equipment that will allow them to “view” material presented as well as retrieve material from the online environment. No department protocols have been established for dealing with visual or hearing-impaired students within the tutorial setting. How these students fare depends on the level of sensitivity of the specific tutor as well as the student’s own willingness to be proactive to contact the SLDD to advocate on his/her behalf. Though as noted before, this advocacy does not include modifications of course content from the particular course perspective. Accommodation for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia typically includes no modification of content but instead assistance in the form of additional time at formal examinations; these students may also be allowed to type instead of hand-write final exam papers and a trained/willing tutor in assessing the written product of dyslexic students evaluates the student’s competency. If a student with a learning disability does not self-identify to the SLDD then no provision is made within foundation courses. Similarly, students who because of the nature of assignments within the course may wish to incorporate differently-able students into group activities are left to their own devices. No material is provided to them from the course/department to facilitate or maximise interaction with a differently-able peer.

In terms of delivery as indicated earlier, the lecture mode dominates and while the disadvantages of this mode have been fairly well-documented (Bligh, 1998; Cashin, 1988; Finkel, 2000), the advantage remains that it allows for the dissemination of material to a large group at
the same time. There are also strategies such as breaking up lectures with “short cooperative processing times” which can assist in maximising learning opportunities within the lecture (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). The forum also facilitates question and answer periods where misconceptions or misunderstandings can be quickly addressed; however, this mode assumes that all students present can see, hear and follow at the same pace the content-rich slides presented. Tutorial sessions on the other hand are much smaller and intimate. Tutorials allow students an opportunity to practice skills- primarily language and organization under the supervision of an assigned tutor. The collaborative environment also encourages all the benefits of collaborative learning. Still, because the venues are small - twenty chairs organized around a long central table with a white board at the front of the room, there is limited room for physical movement or re-organization of the space. These sessions are also approximately one hour long and tutors have complained that there is very little time to explore creative ways of meeting the curriculum objectives assigned. If the course is therefore to meet the needs of a diverse student population a re-conceptualization of teaching is imperative.

**The Problem**

The current problem manifests when teaching foundation courses at the tertiary level that includes teaching students with special educational needs (SEN) in the same spaces as those students without SEN. Students with SEN often experience reduced accessibility as special needs considerations are not viewed as a significant part of Schulman’s five key elements: vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis.

**Objectives**

The main objectives of this paper are firstly, to review the traditional modes of presenting foundation courses with a focus on EAP. Secondly, to suggest various modes of presentation which are useful for students with various types of exceptionalities. Finally, discussions, recommendations and conclusions will be presented.

**Guiding Questions**

The following questions will guide the discussions:

1. At the tertiary level, how have foundation courses traditionally been presented?
2. What are the recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses so as to cater for exceptional individuals in the classroom?
3. How can an evaluation of both approaches improve practice in tertiary level classrooms?

**Review of the Literature**

In the literature review section which follows we examine inclusive teaching and learning at higher education, the theories that have traditionally underpinned the teaching of foundation courses and move from there to consider pedagogical issues raised by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) as two specific approaches that pinpoint areas in which avenues for creating a more inclusive learning environment within language teaching at the tertiary level can be conceived. Students with SEN are generally regarded as those students who need adjustment to curriculum and/or teaching techniques to function effectively in the learning environment. Students with SEN range from the most profound of disabilities to those students who may be gifted and talented; this broad range of need demands not only variability in classroom response but also a continuum of placement options to meet the educational needs of all students at The UWI. There are some 13 recognized disability categories according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). Referred to hereinafter as IDEA (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2013). The likelihood of students with any one or more of the IDEA categories of need presenting in a classroom at the tertiary level varies depending on the prevalence estimates at this level. In keeping with international prevalence estimates, the occurrence of students with learning disabilities and difficulties in classrooms is more likely to occur than other categories of special educational need. In general, Learning Disabilities account for 50% of all disabilities which present in classroom settings (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2013). Other common categories of educational need include emotional and behavioural disabilities, difficulties with hyperactivity and attention/inattention, physical disabilities, and sensory disabilities such as blindness/visual impairment and deafness/hearing impairment. Recognizing that students will present with SEN demands a response in the form of course design, adaptations, accommodations and the use of enhanced technologies in the classroom.

Thomas and May (2010) posited that inclusive teaching and learning can be viewed as “the design of curriculum and pedagogy to facilitate an inclusive community of learning for all students, whatever their background, and which challenges and supports individuals to achieve
their full potential” (p. 19). This is applicable at all levels. Traditionally, the efforts geared at the paradigm shift towards a more inclusive education system have been focused at the primary and secondary level. However, in recent years, higher education has become more inclusive; but, the curriculum and teaching methods have not been altered sufficiently in response to incorporating diverse students and meeting their unique educational aspirations. The one-size-fits-all, traditional model of lecture-style teaching and teacher-driven education continues to dominate at the tertiary level (Dosch & Zidon, 2014).

**Principles of English for Academic Purposes**

The traditional format for the presentation of foundation courses which include English for Academic Purposes, has hinged on two main approaches to the teaching of English at the tertiary level. There is the genre-based approach, coming out of the work of Swales (1981, 1990) and Bhatia (1991, 1993) which theorizes that students can be taught to master the requirements of a specific writing style or genre by analysing the frequency with which certain linguistic patterns or moves are repeated. Genre theory is therefore broadly concerned with the ways in which individuals use language within specific communicative contexts and how they draw on their knowledge to make appropriate choices suitable to context. Writing is seen according to this view as a social practice modified by the context in which it is required (Hyland, 2003). Good writing is therefore not confined to a universal standard but is influenced by the environment - school, work, home in which it is practiced. Text and context are thus the two pivotal axes on which student learning is pinned (Hyland, 2003). Genre-based teaching to some extent is seen as part of the backlash to process teaching which advocates that through a process of practicing models provided by the teacher, students can learn to produce error-free writing. Multiple drafts, feedback, a cycle of prewriting and drafting - moving towards the completion of an edited, finished product, the incorporation of peer review are hallmarks of the process approach.

Critics of the process approach argue that the emphasis on learner autonomy leaves little room for “ways of scaffolding students’ learning and using knowledge of language to guide them towards a conscious understanding of target genres and the ways language creates meaning in context” (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). There are others though like Badger and White (2000) who argue that genre and process approaches to writing should be seen as complementary rather than opposing approaches. They point out that both see writing as primarily a linguistic activity- though with greater emphasis being placed on social context in genre-based
writing. Seemingly in line with genre-based approaches, each foundation course emphasizes a particular style of writing deemed suitable to a specific context - there is thus a foundation course for science students, one for law/literature students. EAP with its focus on expository writing is seen as the one with the widest applicability to the tertiary writing environment. Within each course there is emphasis - in line with process approaches - on the importance of drafting, peer feedback and evaluation. Research has also shown that good feedback is important to helping learners to be able to self-assess and improve their learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2005). One criticism raised however about process/product approaches is the devaluation of prior skills of the learner. This is a significant criticism in light of the focus of this paper. As has been shown, the present structure of foundation courses gives little consideration to the skills that a differently-able learner may possess and while the present curriculum focus of the course is developed around a process core of pre-writing, drafting, editing as well as consideration for audience needs and context, there is also a need to consider context from the perspective of learners with different abilities. UDL offers an approach through which the benefits of both the genre and process approaches can be employed for maximum learner benefit.

Universal Design for Learning Format
The UDL concept has its genesis in the discipline of architecture. UDL was first developed by Anne Meyer and David H. Rose, co-founders of Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) - a non-profit organisation (2000). UDL is a set of principles geared towards the development of curriculum and supporting instructional materials and activities that make participatory and learning goals achievable by students with notable differences in their ability to see, hear, speak, move, read, write understand English, attend, organize, engage and remember. UDL is underpinned by three basic principles: (1) Multiple Means of Representation, (2) Multiple means of Expression, and (3) Multiple Means of engagement.

The first principle underlying UDL is the belief that there are multiple ways of representing knowledge during the learning process. Representation is defined in the literature as designing instructional materials that make content accessible to the greatest number of diverse learners (Capp, 2017). Hitchcock et al. (as cited in Capp, 2017) elaborated by recommending the use of multiple examples which allow classroom teachers to highlight the critical features of a concept and differentiate that concept from others. This facilitates both deeper engagement and broader
access to the concept. Scaffolding is a strategy that complements this principle as it identifies for students, relevant information and potential solutions, thus simplifying tasks (Coyne, Pisha, Dalton, Zeph, & Smith, 2012). Secondly, Multiple means of Expression is based on the premise that students can demonstrate their action and expression in many ways. Moreover, proponents advance that providing students with control of their education and choice of activities increases student engagement. Thus, by providing students with choice in terms of both how they access information, and represent their knowledge and understanding, accessibility to the learning process is increased for all students (Katz, 2016). Multiple means of Engagement is the final principle underlying the UDL framework. Student engagement is generally a secondary outcome measure of using principles one and two of UDL to improve the learning process (Capp, 2017), therefore, within the UDL framework, providing multiple means of representation and expression leads to student engagement. Each UDL principle can be implemented by adhering to a set of accompanying supporting principles which direct classroom delivery and the creation of classroom instructional materials (Meyer & Rose, 2006; National Center on UDL, n. d.). For example, it is noteworthy that technology integration underpins each principle of UDL as it provides both the teacher with a means of representing knowledge in multiple ways, and students with a means of demonstrating their understanding in multiple ways (LaRocco & Wilken, 2013).

**Differentiated Instruction**

In explaining a differentiated classroom, Tomlinson (2014) notes that there are two “givens” which are critical. Firstly, there are content requirements and secondly, there are learners who are all unique and therefore vary in how they engage in the teaching and learning process. The philosophy that underpins activity in a differentiated classroom is that a nurturing environment promotes learning. Tomlinson further posits that differentiation is a teacher’s proactive response to a variety of learner needs and this response is shaped by the teacher's mind-set and philosophy. Teachers who utilize DI take into consideration multiple aspects of learners to best meet their educational needs. Three diagnostic formative components are utilized to best understand personal characteristics of students and their academic skills: readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2001). Student readiness refers to a student’s proximity to the desired educational outcome based on background foundational knowledge, past experiences, opportunities for learning, and skill level. Student interest is akin to intrinsic motivation
Because if one taps into a student’s interest, motivation is increased (Dosch & Zidon, 2014). Finally, a student’s learning profile is defined as “a preference for taking in, exploring, or expressing content” (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, p. 17).

Additionally, the teacher’s response will be guided by the following general principles of differentiation: an environment that encourages and supports learning, quality curriculum, assessment that informs teaching and learning, instruction that responds to student variance and leading students and managing routines. Teachers can therefore differentiate through Content, Process, Product, Affect/Environment. Content is therefore that body of information conveyed in teaching/learning. Process is the mechanism by which students actually learn the content. Product is the output, the way in which students demonstrate learned content. Affect/Environment is the feel or tone in the classroom. How students actually deal with the teacher’s methods will depend on their readiness, interest and learning profile. Teachers will use a variety of instructional tools in proactive response to the two given content and learner needs. Tomlinson (2001) highlights the flow of instruction that guides a differentiated classroom moves from whole class preparation, to review and sharing, to individual or small group engagement.

The literature has revealed the success of DI at the primary and secondary level, but only a few studies have tackled the effects at the tertiary level. However, of the few, there is cause for some optimism as Livingston (2006) found success utilizing differentiated instruction in his undergraduate education course and a 2010 study revealed that the students successfully met the course objectives and that the participants in the experimental sections perceived the course more positively due to the differentiated methods of instruction (Chamberlin & Powers, 2010). Furthermore, in a local study, Joseph, Thomas, Simonette and Ramsook (2013) concluded that “modeling differentiated instruction at the tertiary level yielded more positive than negative outcomes” p.39. Additionally, it was highlighted that student perceptions of differentiated instruction were also encouraging with 90% agreeing that the differentiated instructional approach stimulated their interest in the curriculum studies course and the majority reported higher levels of intellectual growth as a result of exposure to differentiated instruction (Joseph et. al., 2013).

Discussion

Applying the lens of UDL to foundation courses in general raises the following concerns. Firstly, present course delivery is not suitable for all students as it is based on one size fits all, one premise is that all students
can write. Secondly, content is delivered mainly verbally without special consideration for the physically impaired, the hearing impaired or the visually impaired. Thirdly, there is the issue of time. The English Language Foundation Unit does provide writing workshops in the form of grammar and writing but the limited time period for each session does not necessarily facilitate the needs of the special learner. A UDL approach to teaching advocates for a variety of modes of expression. This UDL principle requires multiple modes of representation, but in this course there are no alternatives to auditory information within the classroom. UDL also promotes multiple modes of action, currently within course material and delivery there are few illustrations of concepts non-linguistically. An accurate description of FOUN 1001 indicates no integration of assistive technologies and no choice of media for communication.

A Differentiated Foundation Course
The acquisition of information, behavioural skills and attitudinal change as identified by Bligh (1998) still remain key areas of focus at the tertiary level, but these can still be achieved taking into account special needs. An examination of FOUN 1001 reveals that there is a strong base that can be enhanced through the application of UDL. The description, purpose, goals and objectives remain the same. A few adjustments therefore can assist in fully realizing the objectives of the course for all learners. Content, organisation, teaching strategies and assessments would be the focus of change. Each of these is taken below:

Content
Weimar (2002) points to the importance of adopting teaching strategies that would ensure a “learning-rich” environment for all learners is maximized. Thus, in EAP intensity and depth would be the two main areas of concentration for students with learning disabilities. These would have to be tailored to cater for learners who require different levels of specificity. Stages of the writing process for example, can be explained either as simple one-line statements or more complex paragraphs going into specific detail at each stage. Similarly, when discussing expository strategies, since there are choices linked to assessment, the choice can be made considering the limitations each student may have. Students can be specifically steered into a particular strategy by making the instruction for that specific strategy more detailed than another. Brueggemann, White, Dunn, Hefferon, and Cheu (2001) argue for the adoption of non-traditional means of assessment within the composition classroom that cater for students with special needs, so that where
written proposals, outlines or early drafts are required experiment with drawing, sculpting or dramatizing the plan. Being asked to conceptualize a project from a different perspective can trigger new insights for all writers, helping us generate connections we might not have made in word-locked prose. (p. 381)

This means that all students can benefit from a learning environment that encourages pedagogical diversity.

**Organisation**

Organisation can be amended to include a continuum of groupings by numbers. The advantages of cooperative learning have been well-documented (Bonwell & Sutherland 1996; Gibbs & Simpson, 2005; Oakley, Felder, Brent, & Elhajj, 2004). Evenbeck, Ross, and Kinzie (2010) also advocate for “interaction with diversity” as a means of encouraging students from different faculties, backgrounds and skills opportunities to work together in groups. There is even research to show that the optimum group size for learning consists of three to five members (Oakley et al., 2004); however, consideration has to be given to the fact that for students with learning challenges, groups of two might be optimum - with accommodation also being made for those learners who may need to work by themselves.

**Teaching Strategies**

Lectures or plenary sessions need to move beyond “chalk and talk”. The PowerPoint should be used expertly, avoiding the overuse of text. Even at the tertiary level many learners are visual learners. More use must be made of graphics and graphic organizers in order to facilitate wider participation. Students can easily slip through the cracks if careful monitoring is not done. In support of technology integration, Kennedy and Deschler (2010) suggest that “literacy instruction should reflect multimedia design principles that are a match for the cognitive learning needs of the intended population of learners” (p. 293). For learners with challenges a multimodal approach is recommended that incorporates both the oral and written word; a variety of practice opportunities and one on one instruction, incorporating where possible the use of assistive technologies (Leons, 2013).

**Course Assessment**

Generally, students with special needs perform better on coursework than they do under examination conditions. A flexible divide between the percentage for coursework and the final exam needs to be considered for
students presenting evidence of special needs. Consideration should also be given for alternative forms of assessment aside from paper and pencil. Giving students extra time to complete assignments should also be considered (Aithal & Kumar, 2016).

Students with special needs should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of content through portfolios, oral assessments and even through 100% in course continuous assessment. Again, ample use must be made of both low-tech and high-tech devices for assessment as well as for teaching and learning within the course. Variable modifications to credit assessments should be incorporated in the whole assessment framework. A variety of rubrics should be provided to accommodate for modifications to both course content and assessment responses.

**Independent Study**

While the myElearning component of the course offers opportunities for self-paced learning, further infusion of technology is required in the form of text to speech devices which work well for students with mild to moderate reading difficulties. And while there is a cost to the incorporation of these devices, this also has to be balanced against the fact that the creation of a more inclusive learning environment will also give the University a competitive edge in an increasingly aggressive educational marketplace. There must also be some re-calibration of course policies. Classes and mandatory attendance for students for example, need to be balanced against what is available in the physical environment as regards accessibility to students in wheelchairs, crutches and tutorial rooms. Adjustments can be made to provide alternative means of attendance such as teleconferencing using platforms like Zoom and Moxtra where students who are physically challenged can access both plenary and tutorial sessions.

**Recommendations**

**Teacher Education**

Although, The UWI since 2006 has mandated that all incoming lecturers be trained in the Master of Higher Education (M.HEd.) or The UWI Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning (CUTL) programmes to ensure quality and standardized training at the tertiary level, there is need to incorporate techniques to equip lecturers to recognize and respond to diverse learning needs within the tertiary level classroom. While adult learners will take greater responsibility for their learning than learners at
other levels of the education system, these adult learners still need the informed consideration of tertiary level facilitators. In a seminal study Wong and Wilson (1984) concluded that when students with learning challenges are taught how to organize ideas around core subtopics related to expository writing they were able to move successfully to understanding how to put together paragraphs. This is particularly important in teaching expository writing, particularly as Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, and Baker (2001) observe that students “with learning disabilities have more difficulty learning about basic text structures such as compare-contrast and cause-effect” (p. 297). Teachers who are trained in strategy instruction methods for example, can show learners “...how to attack expository material, to become more deliberate and active in processing it” (p. 298). The reality is also that students are moving up the education ladder and as such the end product is influenced by what has happened in the primary and secondary schools. Linkages will provide a seamless transition and ensure that at all levels teachers are aware, prepared and facilitating the development of all learners using similar concepts, ideas and practices throughout. Teacher education is thus a critical component moving forward.

Architectural Design

As the university continues to physically expand, thought must be given to the construction of spaces of learning that help in the creation of environments that are conducive for learning for a diverse population. The fixed design currently employed mitigates against this. Bennet (2007) makes a convincing case for paying attention to the physical design in higher learning:

> We often start the design of learning spaces with service and operational considerations rather than with questions about the character of the learning we want to happen in the space . . . The better we understand the design elements that afford college students opportunities to learn and the spaces in which students may act on these opportunities, the more likely we are to design successfully and get full value from our investment in learning spaces. (p. 14-15)

Each category of need requires unique plans to respond to individual needs. Considering the requirements of a diverse learning population is another critical component of encouraging best practice at The UWI.
Inclusive Teaching and Learning at the Tertiary Level

Classroom Interaction
The fixed one-hour tutorial format should be changed to allow students with special needs the opportunity to access one on one sessions or small group sessions where meeting individual needs will be easier. Some strategies that have been employed by other higher educational institutions include making course material available in more than one format - sometimes in a simplified version; increasing classroom assessment to include forms that do not incur marks but serve as developmental markers for learning challenged students; and assigning student mentors to assist challenged students (Athler & Kumar, 2016). The cry is always resources but providing for the needs of a diverse population is one of the strategies that universities are investing in to build their student intake.

Cross Faculty Collaboration
The study also indicates a need for more cross faculty collaboration for the collection of data to determine which changes need to be made to facilitate all learners utilizing best practice. One of the things that was most evident in approaching this study was the paucity of data on the intake and throughput of students with special needs at The UWI. Cross faculty collaboration is needed to research pertinent issues such as how identified students perform across different subject areas? What are the strategies being used in different faculties to teach a diverse learning population? Can these strategies be successfully deployed in other subject areas? What can be done to assist the self-perception of learning challenged students who exist in a wider societal context that stigmatizes difference? Are there faculty procedures or cross-faculty endeavours that can assist? Changes in administrative policies are needed. Much more in terms of support needs to be done to assist the SLDD. Athler and Kumar (2016) point to the practice of relaxing 5 percent of the minimum marks on entry level tests for incoming students who meet the general entry level requirements as a means of encouraging their pursuit of higher education and following this up with organized support measures through their study.

Conclusion
Foundation courses such as EAP which target a wide cross-section of the student population should lead the way forward as models of inclusive opportunities explored and served at the tertiary level. A move away from traditional teaching and towards teaching as scholarship will ensure that the needs of all students are met within these inclusive opportunities. The recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses are UDL and
differentiated instruction. These teaching strategies will address the problem of meeting the challenges that diverse learners in the classroom pose. Additionally, adjustments in the areas of teacher education, architectural design, classroom interactions, and cross faculty collaboration are seen as key to enhanced accessibility for learners with special learning needs at the tertiary level.

References


PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BARBADOS: Applications of the Pre-Service Emerging Reflective Teacher Training (PERTT) Model

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One of the barriers to the development and adoption of inclusive education philosophies and practices “is the lacklustre will of [in-service] teachers to participate in the paradigm shift toward inclusive education.” In Barbados there are no pre-service teacher training programmes in inclusive education. Pre-service education is critical to the development of the reflective teacher; one who has developed the core psychological constituents needed to demonstrate effective inclusive education practices. We argue that, prospective teachers through pre-service training, can learn to effectively integrate and utilize inclusive education practices that respond to individual differences and change attitudes towards diversity, which will contribute to a just and non-discriminatory society. The principles underpinning the pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model were applied and quantitatively and qualitatively explored in a sample of Barbadian teachers, and the findings highlight the importance of the psychosocial mechanisms through which an ‘inclusive philosophy’ in a pre-service teacher training framework can emerge.

Introduction

Research Problem

Inclusive education is, “an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of . . . students” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3). In Barbados there has been some recognition of the importance of inclusive education and as such, over the past two decades the Government of Barbados has provided in-service teacher training in the areas of special needs education and inclusive education while working towards policy to implement all aspects of inclusion across the education landscape (Development of Education National Report of Barbados, 2008). However, research conducted in Barbados has found that one of the barriers to the development and adoption of an inclusive philosophy and inclusive practices among in-service teachers, “is the lacklustre will of teachers to participate in the paradigm shift toward

Moreover, in another study, it was found that some untrained teachers in Barbados lacked adequate pedagogical knowledge prior to receiving in-service teacher training and that many untrained teachers were more likely to be resistant to new knowledge, “as they already think that they know what they need, in order to teach effectively” (Jones, 1997, p.176).

These findings demonstrate the need for pre-service training if teachers are to adequately and wholeheartedly adopt inclusive education teaching practices in the classroom. This is because pre-service training establishes the foundation for continuous development of teachers as reflective lifelong learners (Jules & Maynard, 2015); professionals who are constantly challenging themselves to diversify their craft to suit the unique and varied needs of their students. For the purpose of this paper pre-service training is defined as teacher training provided for prospective teachers who are yet to enter the teaching profession (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler & Shaver, 2005).

**The Need for Pre-Service Teacher Training in Barbados**

In 1993 the need for pre-service teacher training was recognised by the Cabinet of Barbados, as Erdiston Teachers’ College was required to deliver pre-service teacher training (Lucas, 1996). Despite this governmental mandate, pre-service teacher training continues to be a critical gap in the teacher education system in Barbados. More recently, as stated by the acting Chief Education Officer of Barbados, Karen Best, “there are significant numbers of teachers in secondary schools without professional qualifications [and] . . . too many teachers . . . are untrained and unable to access training and worst yet, indifferent to training” (Thompson, 2012, p.1). Supporting these sentiments, the Minister of Education in 2013 stated that Barbadian teachers need to constantly reflect on their teaching methodologies and explained that there is a need for more “self-reflective practitioners” in the country (Gill, 2013, p.1). Hence, irrespective of the move towards adopting inclusive practices within Barbadian classrooms, the current teacher training system employed in Barbados must be interrogated if the true benefits of inclusion are to be realized.

In today’s schools it is inevitable that teachers are going to have to work with students who have exceptional needs. The concept of inclusion “…has moved far beyond the narrow perception of inclusion as a means of understanding and overcoming a deficit . . . it is defined much more broadly and encompasses issues of universal involvement, access,
participation and achievement (Ouane, 2008, p.19).” Hence, it is critical that teachers enter the classroom with a full understanding of inclusive education so that they can effectively teach and reach every individual student. Therefore, it is argued that inclusive education in Barbados should begin prior to teachers being placed before the classroom. Application of the pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model (Jules & Maynard, 2015) is engaged to highlight the psychosocial theoretical mechanisms through which an ‘inclusive education philosophy’ in a pre-service teacher training framework can emerge. Through the adoption of the PERTT model prospective teachers can learn how to effectively integrate and utilize inclusive education practices in order to respond to individual differences and change attitudes towards diversity, all of which will contribute to a just and non-discriminatory society.

The Pre-Service Emerging Reflective Teacher Training Model

The pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model provides a theoretical account of the psychosocial pathways which contribute to the development of core psychological constituents of the emerging reflective teacher. Those constituents include self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Jules & Maynard, 2015). Hence, the PERTT model when applied to inclusive education proposes that teacher-trainees should first be allowed to acquire and assimilate pedagogical theory, instead of engaging in trial and error learning.

The PERTT model is comprised of two systems and three subsystems which contribute to the pre-service teacher education training environment (Figure 1). The initial psychosocial system is characterized by the intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions between the teacher educator, trainee and peers. Hence, the psychosocial system encompasses three subsystems: trainee-to-teacher educator; trainee-to-peer and trainee-to-self. As the emerging reflective teacher develops, these subsystems provide five interpersonal process outcomes which are: reflective practices, scaffolding, guidance and support, modelled behaviours and reinforcement from teacher educators and peers. The structural system encapsulates the psychosocial system and provides resources, both human and physical to the pre-service training programme. We are therefore proposing that an inclusive philosophy can be incorporated into a pre-service training programme within the Barbadian context along the same pathways outlined by the PERTT model.

It is theorised that the infusion of inclusive curricula within a pre-service training framework would increase the likelihood that the trainee
teacher, prior to entering the classroom, would have an understanding and appreciation for all student exceptionalities and is likely to engage in a reflective process from the outset. The development of the core psychological constituents of self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation within the context of inclusive education would ensure that the emerging reflective teacher over time is able to hone teaching skills underpinned by an inclusive philosophy which will ultimately help to shape and guide inclusive practices in schools.

Study Objectives
Given that the theoretical pathways of the PERTT model will be investigated the objectives of the study are as follows:
1. To determine the perceived importance of reflective practices, scaffolding, guidance and support, modelled behaviours and reinforcement from teacher educators and peers.
2. To determine the perceived importance of providing physical infrastructure to an inclusive education pre-service training environment.
3. To explore emergent themes to understand teachers’ perceptions about the perceived importance of the interpersonal outcomes of the PERTT model to the development of the characteristics of the reflective inclusive educator.

Methodology
Research Design
A mixed methods research design, more specifically, a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) was employed to explore the mechanisms underlying the PERTT model; mechanisms hypothesized as being important to the development of the emerging reflective inclusive educator. Quantitative data analysis was given least weight as descriptive statistics (frequencies and means) were used to probe the first two objectives of the study. While qualitative analyses (the dominant mode of analysis of the study) were used to probe all three of the study objectives. It was in this way that a richer understanding of the descriptive findings was obtained. Given the heavy demand on teachers’ time the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data was deemed appropriate in this study.
Participants
A purposive sample of ten trained teachers (see table 1) were surveyed in order to discover their perceptions of the relative importance of underlying psychosocial pathways and tenets of the PERTT model within the context of reflective teaching and inclusive education practices in schools. Ten teachers were sampled, of which six were male and four were female and they ranged in age from 25–65 years (mean age = 42.8). All of the participants had received teacher training to the level of Diploma in Education, from the teacher training college in Barbados and had graduated between 1975 and 2016. They had been teaching in the public-school system between 3 - 46 years (mean number of years of teaching experience = 20.3). These teachers were conceptualized as experts of the education system who are in the best position to offer explanations about the applicability of the PERTT framework to a pre-service inclusive education teacher training programme.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher no.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Year of graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrument

Teachers completed a semi-structured questionnaire designed by the researchers to capture the key characteristics of the teacher trainee environment with integrated inclusive education philosophy and practices. Questionnaires were used as teachers were selected from various schools. The semi-structured questionnaires allowed for the use of both closed and open-ended questions which enables a mix of qualitative and quantitative information to be gathered. Hence, allowing the researcher to better understand the views of the participants. The instrument development was based on the theoretical framework of the PERTT model. The questionnaire developed consisted of two sections. The first section encompassed general questions about background variables of the teachers: age, gender, years of experience as a teacher, and the year of graduation from the Diploma in Education teacher training programme.

In the second section of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked questions based on the PERTT model. The questions were designed to capture the teachers' subjective attitudes about the relevance of the interpersonal outcomes of the PERTT model to pre-service inclusive education. A five-point single item Likert scale response format was used to answer 10 closed-ended questions in addition to 10 corresponding open-ended questions, where participants were able to explain their quantitative answers. The following are examples of the kinds of items used for some of the constructs investigated: “In your opinion, how important do you think it is for instructors to provide teacher-trainees with opportunities to reflect on the use of inclusive practices when in training?”; “To what extent do you agree that peer reinforcement is important to the development of inclusive education competencies during teacher training?”; and, “In your opinion, how important is it for instructors to tailor the difficulty of assigned tasks overtime when teaching inclusive education practices during teacher training?”.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from The University of the West Indies (Cave Hill) Ethics Committee. Participants were required to sign a paper-based consent form before they completed the questionnaire. Through the use of an information sheet, participants were informed of the purpose of the research. Participants were also assured of anonymity and informed about their rights to participate and voluntarily withdraw from the study at any point in time for the duration of the research.
Data Analysis
In order to address the research objectives a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design, QUAL-Quan mixed methods design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), was utilised. For the quantitative data, descriptive analyses were conducted to provide an overview of the participants’ demographic characteristics and years of teaching experience. In addition, frequencies were presented for responses to the closed-ended questions which probed the perceived importance of the five interpersonal process outcomes of the PERTT model. Whereas content and thematic analyses were used to analyse the qualitative data obtained. As is customary with this research design, the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately before being compared and inferences discussed (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

A three-level categorization system was employed for text analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions of the semi-structured questionnaire. The categories included: (1) low-level text-based categories, (2) middle-level theme, and (3) high-level theoretical constructs (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This three-tiered organizational framework was used to provide the abstract bridge between the project concerns and those of the respondents. Themes emerged in the qualitative data that provided clarification of the teachers’ perceptions obtained during the quantitative aspect of the study. These themes were described and illustrated by representative quotes from the teachers. In the section to follow the findings will be discussed through the theoretical lens of the PERTT model and relevant literature.

Findings

Quantitative Results
All of the participants reported that they thought it was very important to absolutely essential for instructors to provide teacher-trainees with opportunities to reflect on the use of inclusive practices, receive guidance and support, as well as be exposed to appropriate models when learning inclusive pedagogy in a pre-service training environment. Generally, the majority of respondents viewed reinforcement and instructional scaffolding as being of average importance to absolutely essential to pre-service teacher training in inclusive education (see Table 2). Moreover, as shown in Table 3, the importance of peer collaboration to the development of inclusive education skill sets was exemplified by the responses of the participants. Teachers generally reported agreement with the importance of reflective practices, guidance and support, reinforcement and modelled
behaviours being facilitated within the teacher training peer group. Furthermore, physical resources were deemed as very important to absolutely essential by the majority of the respondents (see Table 4).

**Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative findings will be presented in the following section. Each of the interpersonal process outcomes of the PERTT model are explained in detail via the emergent themes. Examples from the voices of the teachers are included for each theme.

**Themes supporting the importance of reflective practices**

i. Inclusive teaching strategies are perceived to be better assessed through reflection.

All teachers sampled were of the view that trainees’ ability to moderate one’s thoughts about the use of inclusive pedagogy would likely increase as a result of their engagement in reflective practices. For example, it was found that reflective activities would teach trainees how to “review . . . teaching strategies” (Teacher #1) and engage in, “critical analysis on used methods” (Teacher #8). Moreover, trainees would learn skill sets to discern the “positive and negative areas of lessons” (Teacher #3) and understand when to “maintain what works” (Teacher #10).

ii. Reflection can contribute to an inclusive teaching philosophy.

It was the opinion of one teacher that, “the more reflective a teacher is ... the better student learning activities are [as] . . . classrooms have persons of various cognitive abilities and learning styles” (Teacher #7). Another teacher suggested that engagement in reflective practices would increase trainees’ understanding that one should strive to, “be creative” and that it is important to, “assist their students to engage in the same [reflective] processes as part of their [future students’] learning how to learn” (Teacher #5). Hence, attitudes about how to teach trainees and how best to transfer knowledge to their future students, is likely to develop when given opportunities to reflect within a pre-service environment.
Table 2. Perceived Importance of the Interpersonal Outcomes of the Trainee - Teacher Educator Subsystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and support</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelled Behaviours</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Scaffolding</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3. Level of Agreement Regarding the Occurrence of the Interpersonal Outcomes of the Trainee - Peer Subsystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelled Behaviours</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Perceived Importance of Physical Resources to Outcomes of the Trainee - Teacher Educator Subsystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
iii. Reflection can allow for the modification and improvement of inclusive teaching strategies.

As explained by three teachers, reflection within a pre-service training environment would likely lead to the, “[development of] better [teaching] strategies” (Teacher #4), contribute to a “change of approach” (Teacher #8) thereby resulting in “improvements” (Teacher #10) to teaching methodologies in inclusive education.

iv. The capacity to analyse the inclusive teaching methodologies of peers can develop through collaborative reflection.

Due to the benefits of peer collaboration trainees are more likely to be provided with opportunities to, “… analyse each other” (Teacher #3) and engage in, “cooperative assessment” (Teacher #1). Teachers were also of the opinion that such an interactive process would occur due to the fact that, “two heads are better than one” (Teacher #1) and that collaboration among colleagues “promotes social cohesion” (Teacher #3).

v. The pool of inclusive education knowledge available to teachers can increase through collaborative reflection.

This, according to the teachers sampled is likely to occur due to opportunities for peers to engage in, “… reassessment of teaching strategies” (Teacher #1) and that fellow trainees can, “offer advice on methods of improving each other’s lessons” (Teacher #3). Moreover, peer interactions can, “lead to the sharing of best practices by persons in direct contact with what is happening in the classroom” (Teacher #7).

Themes supporting the importance of guidance and support

i. Trainees are viewed as being inexperienced and lack preparedness.

One teacher described trainees as, “newbies” (Teacher #4) and because, “trainees . . . usually lack experience” (Teacher #1), it was felt that “trainees must be given assurances that they are on the right track” (Teacher #6)

ii. Through emotional and cognitive support instructors can ensure that trainees remain focussed as they acquire skills.

By, “reducing discouraging demotivating experiences on the part of the trainee” (Teacher #1) teacher educators contribute to the personal growth and development of inclusive education competencies. Moreover, teacher educators, “[provide] opportunities for discussion and support as issues arise” (Teacher #6) and are expected to, “encourage their student[s] to press on and complete the course [in order to] ensure continuous success
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and improvement of their students” (Teacher #3).

iii. Trainee-to-peer interactions can create an accepting learning environment for inclusive pedagogy.

As stated by one teacher, “peer assessment... and evaluation of lesson outcomes are non-punitive or non-threatening” (Teacher #1). In addition, interactions with colleagues in training are more likely to facilitate the, “sharing of ideas” (Teacher #3) and due to the view that, “... collaboration and collegiality ... are important ingredients for ... growth” (Teacher #5); “peer teaching [and] peer evaluations are [considered to be] helpful” (Teacher #7).

iv. Guidance and support from peers can increase trainees’ beliefs in their inclusive pedagogical abilities.

This is because the peer group is able to, “aid in confidence building [and] encourages [the] trainee to be more adventurous in the implementation of a variety of teaching strategies” (Teacher #1). In addition, guidance and support from peers, “... boosts morale and esteem within the teacher-trainee” (Teacher #3).

v. Peers can be conceptualized as “more knowledgeable others” due to the guidance and support they provide.

As one teacher stated, peers can, “assist ‘weaker’ students who are experiencing challenges or having misconceptions” (Teacher #3). Others mentioned that peers are more likely to provide actual, “cases and trials” (Teacher #8). Moreover, they, "are the ones in the field and are therefore the best persons to give guidance [and] tips” (Teacher #6). The instruction provided by peers then acts to consolidate and support the material introduced by teacher educators in the training programme.

Themes supporting the importance of reinforcement

i. Reinforcement from teacher educators can serve to increase trainees’ use of inclusive pedagogical skill sets.

Teachers were of the opinion that any incentive received would be geared towards the, “promotion of greater effort” (Teacher #1) when learning inclusive teaching strategies and would act to “boost and motivate trainee teachers” (Teacher #3).

ii. Reinforcement from teacher educators can denote the value of the utilization of inclusive teaching strategies.
As one teacher explained, incentives are likely to, “increase the value attached to the skill” (Teacher #4). Another explained that, “if the trainee believes that it is not relevant to their situations, they may not place emphasis on its development [for example] . . . a project for marks rather than a mention through discussion in class would be better” (Teacher #6). It was also felt that, “incentives help to reinforce the activities, behaviour and priority of the inclusive education” (Teacher #7).

iii. Peer reinforcement can increase a teacher’s confidence to independently use inclusive education skill sets.
This is because, “peer reinforcement is another opportunity to the teacher trainee to gain confidence. Confidence is extremely important to any teacher especially when supports are removed” (Teacher #1). Another teacher was of the opinion that incentives from peers can act to, “encourage steadfastness” (Teacher #3).

iv. Adoption of favourable attitudes towards the use of inclusive education strategies can increase from peer reinforcement.
This is because the reinforcement obtained from peers, “fosters support for [an inclusive] style of teaching” (Teacher #7) and trainees are able to “gather other views and [receive] support to continue” (Teacher #4). Moreover, trainees come to understand from peer incentives that the use of inclusive practices, “become an experience rather than remain a mere concept” (Teacher #5) thereby making it more meaningful to their teaching practice.

Themes supporting the importance of modelling behaviours

i. Inclusive teaching strategies are perceived to be better acquired and learnt through modelling.
All teachers sampled were of the view that it is very important for instructors to model inclusive education practices and viewed the modelling of behaviours as an ideal teaching strategy for conveying the relevance of inclusive practices in the classroom. For example, it was found that modelling would provide trainees with the opportunity to, “... see theory in practice in an objective manner. They themselves can assess strategy outcomes” (Teacher #1). Furthermore, it was reported that modelling allows for “trainee-teachers [to] visually analyse and critique their tutors when it comes to judging appropriate or inappropriate behaviours” (Teacher #3).
ii. Modelling of inclusive education practices by instructors is considered to be essential in the teacher training environment. It was noted that, “students model what they see” (Teacher #4). This is especially the case for trainees, as teachers reported that trainees are “…better able to translate observed behaviours into actions” (Teacher #5) and “... it is easier for the trainees if they see through demonstration” (Teacher #6). In addition, “modelling behaviour aid in assisting young, new teachers who may be unsure or sceptical about certain aspects of teaching . . . [as] modelling is considered a ‘best practice’ method” (Teacher #3). Hence, inclusive education pedagogy is learnt and experienced simultaneously by the trainees, inherently increasing the belief in their ability to engage in inclusive practices.

iii. Modelling of inclusive education practices by peers is considered to be an important part of the training environment as trainees are motivated by peers to adopt inclusive practices. Teachers reported that, “peers have a strong influence and [act as a] motivational force on one another” (Teacher #5), and that such modelling “encourages continued implementation by trainee as a learned behaviour” (Teacher #1). Modelling by peers also serves as “reinforcement of theory” (Teacher #4) in the inclusive education training environment.

Themes supporting the importance of instructional scaffolding

i. Instructional scaffolding provided by teacher educators in the training environment is considered invaluable to meaningful learning and the mastery of inclusive practices. It was reported that instructional scaffolding allows trainees to, “experience positive outcomes with few errors” (Teacher #1). It was also stated that scaffolding allows for, “student[s] to learn at their own pace/capability” (Teacher #4) and plays a proactive role in teacher education because “…in its absence, trainees may be overwhelmed by tasks” (Teacher #5).

ii. Instructional scaffolding can allow trainees to develop new knowledge and skills incrementally while experiencing success. For example, one teacher explained that for trainees instructional scaffolding helps to “[build] confidence [and are] . . . then more likely to continue to implement positive... strategies” (Teacher #1). Hence, trainees develop favourable beliefs in their capabilities to implement inclusive practices. It was also noted that, “[as trainees] progressively experience
success trainees will understand and practice moving from simple to complex in their teaching” (Teacher #5).

**Themes supporting the importance of physical resources**

i. Physical resources can allow for the acquisition and assimilation of inclusive education content by trainees. Teachers were of the opinion that resources are “…important to the development of understanding of inclusive education concepts, especially difficult concepts” (Teacher #5) and are, “very essential to meet the diversity of students [trainees] in the class who may be visual, auditory, ‘hands on’ etc. Resources provide a wealth of stimuli” (Teacher #3).

ii. Physical resources are considered to be necessary for the implementation of inclusive education practices by trainees. It was stated that, “the physical resources help to reduce hindrances to implementing inclusive education” (Teacher #7) and provide, “the tools to develop [inclusive] competencies” (Teacher #6) thereby facilitating “hands on experience[s] . . .” (Teacher #4) when in training.

**Discussion**

The research study provided evidence to facilitate a paradigm shift towards the promotion of an inclusive education philosophy within pre-service teacher training programmes as well as corroborate the usefulness of the PERTT model’s tri-systemic reciprocal network in facilitating the integration of inclusive education in teacher training in Barbados. According to the PERTT model self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation are interrelated constructs and represent the core psychological constituents of the emerging reflective teacher. As applied to inclusive education self-awareness refers to the understanding of one’s unique abilities, values, attitudes and desires (Day, 2000; George, 2003; London, 2001) as a personal inclusive education teaching philosophy develops. Self-efficacy is defined as, “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3) and, critical to the development of the trainee and future mastery of inclusive pedagogy. Self-regulation involves the ability to discern when and how to utilise inclusive strategies within the classroom. As revealed from the qualitative data, the perceived importance of cultivating self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation in the development of the emerging inclusive reflective teacher was evident.
Self-Awareness
Teachers in this study reported the importance of reflection and peer-reinforcement in enhancing self-awareness. It was found that reflective practices assist in the development of an emerging inclusive teaching philosophy. This level of awareness on the part of teachers allows for a more accurate understanding of how they affect students’ learning (Richardson & Shupe, 2003), as the practice of teaching a diverse body of students requires teachers to recognize that they must constantly adapt to meet the needs of all students. Moreover, through peer reinforcement trainees develop favourable attitudes to use inclusive education strategies. Reinforcement therefore increases the perceived value and prioritisation of inclusive strategies. An acceptance and corresponding change towards an inclusive teaching philosophy is likely to motivate trainees to incorporate those pedagogical practices into their teaching in order to improve their students’ learning.

Self-Efficacy
Reflection and peer-reinforcement in addition to receiving guidance and support, modelling behaviours, and instructional scaffolding were found to be important to the development of enhancing self-efficacy. Teacher trainees are inexperienced and lack preparedness. Hence, by interacting with the wider pre-service teacher training peer group, trainees receive guidance and support as well as reinforcement which together increases their confidence in their inclusive pedagogical abilities. Moreover, through the instructional scaffolding and observational learning of instructors and peers, trainees gain opportunities for progressive mastery, assimilate appropriate knowledge and hence, enhance their inclusive education skill sets. Emerging reflective teachers, having garnered such experiences over time, are likely to develop favourable beliefs in their capabilities to implement inclusive practices.

Self-Regulation
With a developing personal awareness of the importance of adopting an inclusive teaching philosophy and an increase in one’s willingness to embrace such a teaching paradigm, the ability to regulate and discern how best to incorporate such strategies in daily teaching is also important. It was found that reinforcement and reflection again played an important role, as well as modelling behaviours in the pre-service teacher training environment. Teacher educators’ use of reinforcement acts to denote the value of the utilization of inclusive teaching strategies. Reflection allows for the modification and improvement of inclusive teaching strategies over
Having been trained within such an environment, trainees would be more likely to critically evaluate and ascertain the relevance of inclusive practices thereby building their pedagogical “toolbox”.

“The central premise of the PERTT model is that through increased self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-regulation, teachers-in-training will enter the workforce better prepared to teach, manage and inspire students in a professional and competent way.” (Jules & Maynard, 2015, p.100).

Hence, in order to move from a deficit model of special education, the application of principles of the PERTT model to inclusive education ensures the development of a robust inclusive teaching philosophy in pre-service teacher-trainees and thus should be considered an essential component of all future teacher training programmes. Pre-service teacher training will help build and establish a new lens through which prospective teachers see all students as exceptional: from the cognitively and physically challenged to the gifted. Hence, participation of students with exceptional needs in inclusive settings is based on the philosophy of equality, sharing, participation and the worth and dignity of individuals. This philosophy is based on the belief that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources.” (Biswal, 2015, p.500)

In conclusion, the PERTT model having been substantiated by empirical evidence would prove to be a valuable framework through which pre-service teacher training in inclusive education can be facilitated within the Caribbean.

References

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PRACTICES AND ROUTINES IN SIWI LESSONS THAT DEVELOP READING PROFICIENCY FOR D/HH LEARNERS.

Paulson Skerrit

The average performance of Deaf and hard of hearing (D/hh) students on tests of reading comprehension is several grade equivalents below their high school hearing peers. This study explored how the reading-writing connection evident in instruction driven with a high fidelity to the principles of Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI) addresses the literacy challenges of D/hh learners. The video footage of SIWI lessons in two grade three classrooms were examined using a comingling of inductive and interpretive analysis and utilizing Spradley’s nine semantic relationships to determine the instructional and learner practices and routines that supported development of word recognition skills. The following instructional and learner practices and routines were identified: engaging students in cognitively demanding discourse that featured extended discourse and persistence in questioning; a high volume of repeated and wide reading; high volume of writing; multiple representation of words with an emphasis on fingerspelling; and attending to language input.

Research has shown that there is a connection between learning to read and learning to write (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Graham & Herbert, 2011; Shanahan, 1998; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). We also know that the ability to decode words is one of the components of reading and a predictor of reading comprehension (Zumeta, Compton, & Fuchs, 2012). This study was used to investigate the range of instructional and learner practices and routines of participants (teachers and students) engaged in Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI) lessons in an ongoing study on student achievement. The goal was to identify, in the context of the unique classroom settings involved in the study, those practices and routines specific to the application of the principles of SIWI that contributed to the development of word identification skills as one measure of reading proficiency.

Literature Review

Over 95% of D/hh learners are born to parents who are not deaf and the others are born in households where one or both parents and other relatives
Paulson Skerrit

may be Deaf and who may also have a fully developed form of natural signed communication (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). This creates a situation where the Deaf child either (1) has limited access to the language spoken in the household, or (2) acquires sign language as their first language and must learn English as a second language (Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009). D/hh learners in any of those two scenarios bring to the literacy table several challenges that need to be addressed in the pathway taken to develop their literacy skills. Researchers identify language deprivation or language delays and world experiences that are not linked with the language used in the early learning environment of D/hh learners as the fundamental challenge (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014; Luckner, Sebald, Cooney, Young, & Muir, 2005; McAnally, Rose, & Quigley, 2007; Trezek, Wang, & Paul, 2011). Even when a D/hh child is born to Deaf parents and exposed very early to a fully developed language, they may be challenged with reading and writing if they have not developed the meta-linguistic awareness that American Sign Language (ASL) or their native sign language has a structure that is different from English and some unique grammatical properties that are modality specific (Wolbers, Graham, Dostal, & Bowers, 2014).

**Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)**

Instruction using SIWI is already benefitting D/hh students. Wolbers, Dostal, Graham, Cihak, Kilpatrick and Saulsburry (2015) demonstrated that D/hh students made gains and have the capacity for further growth in their discourse-level writing skills across recount, information report, and persuasive genres. Dostal, Bowers, Wolbers and Gabriel (2015) noted patterns (e.g., changes in initiative to engage in writing, purpose for writing, awareness of writing ability and independence as writers) that give evidence of development as writers. Students’ engagement in discourse typical of interaction in SIWI lessons builds metalinguistic awareness, and ASL and English linguistic competence (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014). This has the dual effect of promoting gains in both languages. Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers (2011) reported that both low and high achieving students made significant gains in writing length, sentence complexity, and sentence awareness. Dostal (2011) demonstrated the “reciprocity of language learning” (p. vii) by documenting the gains in ASL expressive language on the part of D/hh students receiving SIWI. Those students in that study increased their mean length of utterances (MLU) and reduced the number of unintelligible utterances evident in their ASL expression. Wolbers (2010) investigated the role of explicit language instruction and rereading practices in the development of English writing.
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fluency and writing independence of D/hh students and reported gains in both outcomes.

SIWI, far from being a strategy for teaching writing, is actually a framework that has several pedagogical pillars that guide writing instruction. The pillars or driving principles are listed and defined in Table 1. SIWI can be used to teach any genre of writing. It allows for incorporating strategies that have already proven successful in the tier three level of response to intervention (RTI) settings that emphasize differentiated instruction that meets the individual needs of struggling students (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012).

The Reading Writing Connection
Teaching reading and writing as a simultaneous approach has been grounded in research and fore-grounded in solid theoretical frameworks. The reading-writing connection fits within the transactional paradigm which holds that there exists a fluid relationship between the processes of reading and writing in which everything influences everything (Rosenblatt, 1988). Every transaction with text, as a reader or writer, draws on the linguistic-experiential reservoir of the individual. The theory calls for attention to the individual as a reader and writer and what they bring to the text, the expectations that they have and the choices that they make as they read or write. Each time the individual transacts with text in either the role of reader or writer, they apply, reorganize, revise or extend elements appropriated from their personal linguistic-experiential reservoir in a non-linear manner (Rosenblatt, 1988). This appropriation is accomplished by means of what Rosenblatt calls selective attention. Each time text is being read or written- even in the face of a blank page- the individual is transacting with the personal, social and cultural environment. This is done with an efferent and an aesthetic stance with the reader or writer either adopting more predominantly one or the other or doing so on a continuum (Rosenblatt, 2013). The efferent stance addresses the information being extracted or crafted into the text while the aesthetic stance targets the experience lived (i.e., feelings, associations, memories, image streams) as the text is read or written. To effectively adopt either or both stances requires a fusing of the thought processes of both a reader and a writer.
Table 1. Driving Principles of SIWI and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>The instruction is strategic in the sense that students are explicitly taught to follow the processes of expert writers through the use of word or symbol procedural facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>SIWI is interactive in the sense that students and the teacher share ideas, build on each other’s contributions, and cooperatively determine writing actions. Through this process, the student externalizes his/her thoughts in a way that is accessible to his/her peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic and</td>
<td>Persons have two separate routes to develop ability in a second language—acquiring implicitly and learning explicitly. The implicit and explicit approaches of SIWI aid in developing linguistic competence and metalinguistic knowledge among d/hh students (Wolbers, Dostal, &amp; Bowers, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metalinguistic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>While writing as a group, the teacher identifies balanced literacy objectives for his/her students that are slightly beyond what students can do independently. The teacher is cognizant to target a mixture of word-, sentence-, and discourse-level writing skills that will be emphasized during group guided writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided to</td>
<td>When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer control over the discourse-level objectives (e.g., text structure demands) to the students during guided writing, s/he will then move students into paired writing. The teacher will circulate the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Scaffolds</td>
<td>Showing promise in supporting the learning of d/hh students (Fung, Chow, &amp; McBride-Chang, 2005), visual scaffolds offer another mode of accessing the knowledge of more-knowledgeable-others. In SIWI, students use visual scaffolds to recognize and apply new writing strategies or skills they are in the process of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>During SIWI, the students and the teacher generate, revise, and publish pieces of text for a predetermined and authentic audience. Writing instruction and practice is always embedded within purposeful and meaningful writing activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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As the writer creates a text, they engage in two kinds of authorial reading of the text—constantly re-reading to ensure it fits with their abstracted or explicitly acquired understanding of previously written text and that the words and meaning match the intent or purpose of writing (Rosenblatt, 2013). The writer also experiences the transaction a reader would have with the text by bringing to the text the expectations readers have (Rosenblatt; Shanahan, 1998). At times both kinds of authorial reading converge on the text. Conversely, the reader engages with text, doing so with the stance of a writer (Rosenblatt). The reader may activate the efferent process by means of selective attention and focus almost exclusively on the facts and their impersonal relevance, or by means of selective attention, they may activate the aesthetic process and alternatively hone in on the feelings, sensations, tensions, sights and sounds associated with the factual content of the text and any personal connections in their linguistic-experiential reservoir (Rosenblatt). Of course, the reader in adopting the writer’s stance may transact with the text on the efferent-aesthetic continuum mentioned earlier.

Proficient readers exhibit traits that writers keep to the forefront when they write and make decisions regarding their writing. They make connections to their lived experiences, adopt an alignment with the ideas, visualize, make predictions, ascertain the relevance of details, make inferences, consider implications, integrate information, form interpretations, monitor their understanding, revisit meaning, clarify understanding, analyse craft, self-question and reflect (Holt & Vacca, 1981). Each of these traits translate into cognitive and linguistic processing that take place as the reader and the writer meet at the text—figuratively speaking. This amounts to good readers thinking about writers and good writers thinking about readers when they transact with text (Holt & Vacca; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). The writer thinks of the reader, their interest, their needs and what would be appropriate as they send a message to an audience. “What is prediction for the reader must be foreshadowing for the writer. What is completion for the reader must be, on the writer’s part, meaningful and logical resolution” (Holt & Vacca, p. 940).

In the past theories of reading and writing presented these two processes as opposite sides of a literacy construct with reading as decoding and writing as encoding. However, a look at the neuropsychological factors, cognitive processes, knowledge variables, and product outcomes associated with reading-writing connections, suggest an alternative way to develop the skills of both reading and writing. This alternative approach is supported by the transactional theory of reading and writing (Rosenblatt, 1988, 2013) and other theoretical perspectives including the rhetorical relations view of reading-writing connections (Tierney & Shanahan,
1991), the functional view of reading-writing connections (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000) and the shared knowledge view of reading-writing connections (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). These theoretical underpinnings direct attention to the reciprocal nature of the reading-writing connection. Instruction that takes advantage of the reading-writing connection and increased volume in the opportunities for reading and writing will yield mutually supportive benefits in the development of reading and writing skills.

Research Method

Context for the Present Study

There were two previous efficacy studies that provide context for the current study. In the first efficacy study with students in grades six to eight, findings on writing, language and word identification outcomes were reported (Wolbers, 2007, 2008, 2010). It was a quasi-experimental study involving the genre of information report writing occurring in matched treatment and comparison conditions (N=33 students). Approximately two and one-half hours of SIWI were provided to students in the experimental group each week for eight weeks by a teacher who scored 95% on fidelity of implementation of SIWI. The students in the comparison group were matched in the amount of instructional time each week, but, followed a structured language curriculum with some opportunity to write for real purposes supported by one-on-one conferencing with the teacher. Primary trait rubrics for genre-related features, contextual language and conventions were used by Wolbers to score the pre- and post-writing samples of information and narrative writing (untaught) that were collected from students. The scoring of 15% of the papers involved a second rater with inter-rater reliability above 0.9. Using the Slosson Oral Reading Test-Revised (SORT-R; Slosson & Nicholson, 1990), measurement of pre- and post-word identification abilities was obtained.

In the above efficacy study necessary univariate analysis followed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the data. Significant gains with effect sizes that spanned large to very large (Cohen’s d=1.27 to 2.65) were demonstrated by the treatment group on genre-related features of information report writing as well as in the area of contextual language and conventions. While the genre of narrative writing was not the focus of instruction, the students in the experimental group exhibited significantly greater gains (d=2.207) and there was also appreciable growth in their writing fluency as measured by length (d=1.53). The measurement of word identification ability (d=0.39) likewise indicated statistical significance.
Over the eight-week period of the intervention study the students in the experimental group demonstrated improvements of 0.45 grade levels which contrasted with the absence of gains in word identification in the comparison group.

More recently, a second efficacy study came out of an intervention with students in grades three to five (Wolbers, Dostal, & Graham, 2012). This quasi-experimental study occurred in the second half of a Year II project that was part of a 3-year Institute of Education Sciences-funded project to develop SIWI for use with D/hh students in grades 3-5 to improve writing and language outcomes. The design of this project had 63 students participating in instruction by nine teachers in six schools across treatment and business-as-usual comparison groups. The fidelity to SIWI instruction rating for the teachers ranged from 60.4%-89%. After nine weeks of treatment, samples were collected for recount and persuasive writing. The SORT-R was used to assess students’ word identification abilities. The writing samples were scored using primary traits rubrics that were tied to the respective genres: recount writing- orientation, events and organization, and persuasive writing- opinion, reasons and organization. The Structural Analysis of Written Language (SAWL) was also used to assess the writing samples for word efficiency ratio (WER) at three different levels, words per T-unit, and percentage of complete sentences. Gains in the WER ratios and percentage of completed units would be a reflection of greater linguistic accuracy, and improvements in linguistic complexity would be indicated by increases in the number of words per T-unit (Hunt, 1965).

Multilevel regression analysis of the recount and persuasive writing samples revealed statistically significant results on all primary traits except recount orientation with effect sizes ranging from 0.53 to 2.01 (Hedges’ g). Similar multilevel analysis revealed statistical significance for SAWL language outcomes on the recount writing samples (effects from 0.46 to 1.20) and substantial outcomes with the persuasive writing samples (0.38 to 1.06) corroborating the success of the treatment. The measure of word identification abilities between the treatment and the comparison groups (effect size = 0.11) on the SORT-R was non-significant. However, the tremendous variation in the word identification abilities of students with different teachers in the study and the range in scores for teachers’ fidelity to SIWI (60.4%-89%) begged for a follow up study of the practices and routines that occur during co-construction of text.
The Current Study

The recently mentioned need for a follow up study was the focus of the current study. The focus of this study was on the achievement in reading and writing of D/hh students in the elementary grades and the instructional and learner practices and routines in lessons of teachers who use SIWI to teach writing. The intervention studies mentioned above revealed trends in the data that suggest a link between the practices and routines associated with the use of SIWI as an instructional framework for teaching writing and the gains students made in both their writing and word identification abilities. Since the skill of word identification has been considered a predictor of reading comprehension (Zumeta, Compton, & Fuchs, 2012), there was concern in this study with those practices and routines in SIWI writing lessons which were strong contributors to gains in the development of competencies related to word identification. The identification of these instructional and learner practices and routines, could be foregrounded in terms of instructional fidelity for teachers using SIWI with the goal of developing reading and writing skills as a simultaneous approach.

Participants. The participants for this multiple-study case comprised of two grade three classes from the treatment group in the second year (Year II) of the above-mentioned 3-year Institute of Education Sciences-funded project to develop SIWI for use with D/hh students in grades 3-5 to improve writing and language outcomes. The teachers were trained to deliver writing instruction using the principles of SIWI by means of SIWI professional development workshops led by the program developer and several mentor teachers who have been using SIWI for many years. The SIWI observation and fidelity instrument was used to gather data through observation of teacher and student interactions during classroom instruction and interviews with the teachers.

Data collection. Classroom lessons throughout the year were recorded using a video camera that captured both teacher and students’ interactions. Teachers were interviewed at the end of Year II and the students were interviewed both prior to and after the instructional period in Year II. Assessment data used to select the two grade three classes that made gains in writing, language accuracy and complexity, ASL sign receptive skills and word identification comprised the following: discourse level writing skills in recount and persuasive writing assessed using primary traits rubrics; written language for accuracy and language complexity measured by the Structured Analysis of Written Language (SAWL) (White, 2007), students’ emerging receptive knowledge of ASL phrases and sentences assessed using the ASL Receptive Skills Assessment (ASL-RSA) (Enns, Zimmer, Boudreault, Rabu, & Broszeit, 2013), and a measure of word

**Data analysis.** A comingling of an inductive and interpretive model of data analysis was used to analyse the data. Nodes were created for each unit of analysis or case (the two individual classrooms) and all data relevant to each case were coded in those nodes. The specifics regarding the context for each case (e.g., language or communication mode and other relevant contextual details) were recorded as attributes of each case node. Initial viewing of the video and interview data was done to establish frames of analysis that framed the data into analysable parts.

The next step into the process of data analysis was identifying the domain categories that emerged around nine semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979). The nine semantic relationships through which the domains were inductively created were: strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y); spatial (X is a place in Y); cause-effect (X is a result of Y); rationale (X is a reason for doing Y); location for action (X is a place for doing Y); function (X is used for Y); means-end (X is a way to do Y); sequence (X is a step in Y); and attribution (X is a characteristic of Y). The nature of the semantic relationships was documented in memos linked to the domain category nodes (coding for the cover term). The included terms were the sub-codes that coded for member concepts that are related to the domain categories.

The comingling of the inductive and interpretive model of data analysis resulted in detailed memos linked to nodes and sub-nodes that recorded the impressions that were formed. This step in the analysis also added to the complexity, richness and depth of the data through a search for patterns across domains. The products of the analysis then became the data for further analysis that identified relationships among the relationships- those themes that encapsulated what it all meant. As the researcher looked across domains, a careful search for similarities and differences were made. A final coding of the memos and re-examination of the data revealed instances where interpretations were supported or challenged. While the interpretive model called for a review of the interpretations with the participants, an adaptation of this step involved peer debriefing with the developer of the SIWI model and a monitor who visited the case sites and observed several of the lessons. A draft summary that communicated the interpretations was prepared and this was used as the source for the report on the findings of the study.
Results

Instructional Practices and Routines That Develop Skills in Reading

Engagement in cognitively demanding classroom discourse. The teachers in both the total communication (TC) and the bilingual classrooms engaged in cognitively demanding classroom discourse throughout the lessons. Students were required to think through their responses. The teachers also extended the discourse beyond the here and now to make connections to their personal experiences and those of the students. They connected to world knowledge that was both curriculum related and that which constituted general knowledge. These extended discourses were appropriate for the small group of students that is consistent with D/hh classes as it allowed for active involvement by many if not all of the students. A key feature of the classroom discourse was persistence in questioning. Particularly, in the bilingual setting, the teacher used many more wh-questions, she repeated her questions at least three or four times before requiring a response and some of her question scripts were intended specifically to develop the back-translation skills of the students.

Involvement in a high volume of reading and writing. Many opportunities were seized upon for the teacher to read and write in high volumes. In the bilingual setting, the teacher read for the students from Internet sources and their class notebook. She was consistent in reading using storysigning or storyreading with an emphasis on back-translating to ASL. Both teachers read from several model texts that illustrated the features of each genre of writing that they were working on. For each genre, they worked on several writing projects and this was instrumental in increasing the opportunities for the students to observe the teacher writing English words. The more they were exposed to words when written by the teachers, increased the opportunities for encoding, storage and retrieval.

Representing text in multiple ways. The teachers represented the language of text in various ways in the classroom. They spoke the words, signed the words, mouthed the words, wrote the words, acted out the words, fingerspelled the words using careful and subsequent rapid fingerspelling, drew the word’s meaning and labelled the drawings. They made frequent references to the varied representations either in sequence in a kind of chaining or sandwiching effect or by referring back at later times during the discourse.

Attending to language. Teachers were consistent in calling the attention of students throughout the lesson. They used the ASL sign
Practices and Routines in Siwi Lessons That Develop Reading Proficiency

READY! that was always accompanied by the raised brow and did not proceed until everyone was ready to attend. The Deaf teacher employed additional task-orienting signals such as raising the hand and waiting or performing the signed form of HEY-YOU-THERE. There were times when getting the students’ attention required managing a lack of self-regulation and the Deaf teacher came up with a variety of new and interesting ways to manage the behavioural problems and get the students back on task.

Learner Practices and Routines That Develop Skills in Reading

Repeated and wide reading. Students were required to read either independently or at the teacher’s direction, from Internet and traditional text sources as part of the planning phase in preparation for expository writing. They read text written in the language zone- a space used to build meta-linguistic awareness and to revise and edit text toward closer approximations of written Standard English- as well as on the writing spaces dedicated to planning, organizing and writing English sentences. They read prior to editing English sentences and then each time a new chunk of edited and revised text was being reread, it was read from the beginning of the passage. In the bilingual class, their reading took on a different approach as it involved back translation as they moved from the English text back to signing ASL.

Frequent writing. In the bilingual classroom the students did most of the writing, both when planning, organizing and writing English sentences. They wrote on the board or on their individual writing sheets. Writing took place somewhat differently in the TC setting. While the teacher did most, if not all of the scribing, it was the students who actually generated all of the text. In the TC setting independent writing was done by another teacher in a different classroom.

Representing words in multiple ways. The students in the TC setting spoke and signed using SimCom. They fingerspelled very often either as an alternative to signing or to accompany a signed word. When they worked together without interacting with the teacher, they were observed signing and mouthing as well as fingerspelling. In the bilingual class, they were given more opportunities to write words, draw their meaning, and to act out the meaning of words. They too, mouthed and signed words and fingerspelled words either as an alternative to signing or in accompaniment.

SIWI and the Reading-Writing Connection

The SIWI instructional framework exemplifies instruction that fits within the paradigm of reading-writing connection. Many of the instructional and
learning practices and routines that were identified in this study as contributing to gains in word recognition have been identified as critical aspects of the reading-writing connection. Students engaged in authorial reading each time they read text in preparation to edit and revise and when they engaged in rereading the revised English sentences before continuing to write. The wide reading accomplished by means of the research writers did as they planned for a writing project, and when they read model text that exemplified genre related features, exposed students to sentence structures, contextual language and a wide vocabulary that was used to enrich their writing and reduced the struggle students faced as they tried to express their thoughts down on paper.

Moreover, the extended dialogue that made connections to students and teachers’ personal experiences and to their world knowledge, allowed for students to practice fluidly moving between an efferent and an aesthetic stance when transacting with the text. Students also had the opportunity to write about information they had read. While preparing for expository writing in both settings, the students wrote to real audiences about curriculum related material, and this preparation involved doing research that required reading from a variety of sources. This pattern was in sync with the functional view of the reading-writing connection that supports writing to learn in the content areas. Indeed, SIWI is to be regarded as a model instructional approach situated in the reading-writing connection paradigm.

**Significance**

SIWI is a framework of writing instruction that has resulted in gains in student achievement with writing across genres, written and signed expressive language skills and motivation as writers. The insight gained from this study provided enlightenment on ways that instructional and learner practices and routines can be capitalized on to promote gains in reading development as a simultaneous approach to developing proficiency in writing skills. This study added to the body of knowledge regarding the connection between learning to read and learning to write (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Graham & Herbert, 2011; Shanahan, 1998; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). This study also had several implications for teachers of the D/hh that included the following: incorporating into the instructional skill set and learning activities, those practices and routines which were not yet an explicit part of SIWI; developing new training routines in the SIWI professional development curriculum; foregrounding those instructional routines in the SIWI fidelity instrument; and possibly infusing into the framework, principles that more explicitly address the
read-write connection on both the level of instructional practice and learner skill development.

References


Paulson Skerrit

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Practices and Routines in Siwi Lessons That Develop Reading Proficiency

TEACHERS’ VIEWS OF THE LEARNING POTENTIAL OF STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS: Challenges of Inclusion


One key determinant of inclusion regarding children from low-income households is belief in their learning potential. Teacher educators of the in-service postgraduate Diploma in Education programme are charged with helping teacher-participants interrogate and modify negative views they may hold of students from such backgrounds. Some views may constitute an approach inimical to the empowerment of children. While views of teacher-participants on the learning potential of children from low-income households are discussed early in the programme, there is need for systematic analysis of such views. In so doing, insights gained can guide the approach of teacher educators in their quest for sensitizing teacher-participants as to appropriate responses in educating children from low-income households. Using a qualitative case-study approach, the views of nine teacher-participants were obtained through semi-structured focus group interviews that were analysed thematically using the grounded theory approach. Findings revealed that although teacher-participants expressed views acknowledging the challenging life contexts of students from low-income households, they were also keenly aware of the empowering potential of positive relationships in the educational endeavour. Practical asset-based strategies for teachers and administrators were advanced in response to issues confronting students from low-income households. Recommendations suggested ways in which teacher education could be enhanced.

Background

Each year the School of Education at the St Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, welcomes a cohort of secondary school teachers of various disciplinary specialties for an initial in-service professional development programme of nine months’ duration. This research was carried out with nine teachers of the 2016-2017 cohort of Social Sciences who teach History, Geography, Social Studies and Business Studies. The authors of this research are the teacher educators
(lecturers) who facilitate the professional development of the Social Sciences cohort.

To develop teachers in their personal and professional capacities the programme comprises the courses: *Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations)*, *The Reflective Practitioner*, *Pedagogy as Process and Practicum*. The *Foundations* course fosters discussion on and analysis of various educational issues related to the areas of Language, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, and Health and Family Life Education (HFLE). Secondly, *The Reflective Practitioner* constitutes an action research project geared to foster reflection and improvement on actual practice in the classroom. *Pedagogy as Process* concerns the strategies and issues of the teaching and learning of the Social Sciences and the *Practicum* consists of critical engagement of teachers and teacher educators in the context of actual lessons conducted during the course of the year (The University of the West Indies, Faculty of Humanities and Education, 2016).

**Rationale for the Research**

In an initial teacher-preparation programme, understanding the views teacher-participants hold, affords teacher educators scope for advancing the professional practice of teacher-participants by engaging directly with existing ideas in order to correct or to build on them. Since in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), teachers encounter in schools many children from low-income households, teacher expectations as to the learning potential of such children are of considerable interest as these may influence student achievement (Wilson & Conyers, 2013).

Teacher-participants’ views are thus solicited and discussed early in the programme in order to facilitate a critical engagement of ideas rooted in teacher experience. While teacher-participants provide feedback by way of in-class group presentations, the researchers felt the need to engage in a more deliberate systematic documentation and analysis of teacher-participants’ views. Such an investigation, we felt, could sharpen our approach as teacher-educators in the effort to prepare teachers professionally and to sensitize them to the learning needs of children from low-income households.

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ views of children from low-income households as to students’ learning potential as expressed by teachers on an initial in-service professional development programme at The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, 2016-2017. This investigation aims, not only to elucidate and interrogate
dominant features of teacher constructs, but to discuss the findings in the light of inclusive education.

Expected outcomes include the results of analysis incorporating teachers’ views of students from low-income households as to students’ learning and teachers’ responses to issues confronting these students. Results would guide our approach to teacher education and would add to the literature on inclusive education and on teacher professional development.

**Literature Review**

Inclusion in education “is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

From discourse on the education of special-needs children, namely those “with disabilities, and…who experience difficulties in learning” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 9), concerns were raised as to the practice of separating them from those in mainstream schooling. Eventually the stage of separate or segregated schooling (that often served only a few of those deemed “special”) gave way to the praxis of integration or mainstreaming that fell short due to a lack of adjustments to school organisation, curriculum and pedagogy. Consequently, the concept of inclusive education emerged to view student diversity in a positive way rather than a setback to learning, thus “seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning” (p. 9). Education that is inclusive thus entails the “recognition of the need to work towards ‘schools for all’ - institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs.” (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii).

According to UNESCO (2005), in this on-going process, policy and practice emerged from key principles of inclusion. Firstly, that not only is diversity to be seen in an affirmative manner but response to diversity is an ongoing process with differences appropriated as providing opportunities for learning. Secondly, there is the idea that problem solving is also essential, as it involves the removal of barriers to quality learning. Thirdly, inclusive is conceptualized as involving all learners requiring the fostering of creative ways to facilitate their full development for the achievement of curriculum goals and not only with the performance at examinations. Fourthly, while aiming for all round development, inclusive education pays particular attention to those who may be most at risk of “marginalization, exclusion or underachievement” (p. 16). Finally,
inclusion is not simply a rearrangement of educational practices but anchored in educational philosophy that espouses the development of the individual as a central aim. The enhancement of a person’s potential came to be seen as an entitlement due to every human being. Such a right encompasses more than simply the placement of a child in a school.

Inclusive education holds as a core feature that education is a human right to be afforded to all children. Education as a right achieved worldwide priority in recent decades and has also been expressed in many important documents at the level of the United Nations. The following are key documents pertaining to inclusive education: *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989); *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994); *Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All* (UNESCO, 2000); Education for All: Is the World on Track? (UNESCO, 2000); and *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (UN, 2006).

While targets for inclusion focus on gender, ethnicity and those challenged physically and mentally, concern also includes people from low-income households. In general, attention to the poor and marginalized has become a hallmark of modern democratic societies. Given sharpened awareness of the need to develop and sustain a knowledge-based society, the UK and the USA have attempted to ameliorate the conditions of those from low-income households through policy measures in health, social welfare, housing and educational opportunity (Douglas, 1964; Halsey, Floud & Anderson, 1961; Lupton, 2005; UK Department for Education, 2015; US Department of Education, 2002; US Department of Education, 2009).

In the Caribbean, the colonial heritage has left us a unique paradigm of inequality with patterns of social and economic stratification based on ethnicity and wealth. After achieving independence, great hopes were placed on education as the means of empowering citizens of T&T to leave behind the constraining, elitist and oppressive legacy inherited from the colonial past (Deosaran, 2016). Governments of T&T invested heavily in the development of its people by way of facilitating greater access to educational opportunities by a wider clientele than were previously afforded. Measures adopted included expanding school places and supporting children from poor backgrounds through the provision of free school books, free transport and free school meals.

With the goal of developing the learning potential of students through schooling, official T&T government policy has held firm to the position “that every child has an inherent right to an education which will enhance the development of the maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic, social or religious background” (Trinidad and
Teachers’ Views of the Learning Potential of Students From Low-Income Households

Tobago, National Task Force on Education, 1993, pp. xvii). Today, the issue of inequality of educational opportunity for low income households is still a concern the world over (UNDP, 2011), regionally (UNESCO, 2015) and in Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the T&T Central Statistical Office (CSO), the designation of households with low income refers to those whose combined yearly income falls within the “US$4468 - 5000” bracket, with increasing gradation bands to that of high income designated as within “US$ 7001 - 7500” (Trinidad & Tobago, CSO, 2012, p. 9). Reports on two surveys carried out by Kairi Consultants (Johnson, 2016) indicate that the percentage of those in the population living in poverty has risen from around 16 percent in 2005 to 24.5 percent in 2014 and that 300,000 persons were living in poverty. With this growth in the incidence of poverty in a stratified society, the challenge to promote a key element of inclusion - equity of educational opportunity- increases with implications for non-discrimination and justice in society (UNESCO, 2009).

Within T&T, the education system is also stratified as part of our colonial legacy (Campbell, 1992; De Lisle, 2012). Historically, there have been two main categories of schools, namely the traditional denominational (government- assisted) and government; the former took on the character of “highly valued” prestigious schools and the latter consequently less valued and in some cases “demonized” (De Lisle, Keller, Jules & Smith, 2009, p. 147). A general characteristic of this system is that the denominational secondary schools have in attendance the better academically performing students who mainly come from middle and high-income households, while many from low-income households attend the government schools and are, by and large, academically outperformed by the former (Deosaran, 2016; Jules, 1994; Ryan, Rampersad, Bernard, Mohammed & Thorpe, 2013). Between 2008 and 2012 when considering the number of students gaining five or more passes at the CSEC level, the denominational schools surpassed the government schools by “41% in 2008, 40% in 2009, 44% in 2010, 44% in 2011 and 45% in 2012” (Deosaran, 2016, p. 211).

An official report commissioned by the Government of T&T on Youth and Crime in 2013 (also referred to as The Ryan report) suggested that “those who do not succeed in gaining admission to those ‘prestige’ schools generally have to cope with the psychological trauma of a deep sense of failure, which some never overcome” (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 56). The narrowing of chances toward obtaining a quality education can leave students in unfortunate circumstances. The Ryan report makes connections between the conditions of poverty, crime and educational opportunity indicating that “broken and dysfunctional families, juvenile
delinquency, peer rejection, failure or disruptive behaviour at school, gang membership and incarceration” (pp. 10-11) seem to thrive in the same environment.

Another study albeit in a different context elucidates the link between poverty and habitual school truancy and its relevance to students’ learning potential. In this respect Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) indicate that:

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among low-income students, and it is low-income students who benefit the most from being in school every day... the available data indicate that while chronic absenteeism is deeply detrimental to educational success, just missing more than a week of school can have consequences. (pp. 6-7)

Given the plurality of terms in the literature that are used for classifying schools in T&T, the authors of this study follow De Lisle, Keller, Jules and Smith (2009, p. 147) in their use of the term “highly valued” for those schools generally perceived by stakeholders as those more desirable for children to attend. This designation is in keeping with the aim of the research that investigates teachers’ views of students and thus is more fitting as it incorporates the aspect of the affective.

The existence of “highly valued” schools and thus those “less valued”, serves to institutionalise the issue of inequality. While the challenge of attending to the learning needs of students from low-income families confronts all schools, since the former schools attract the better-off financially, issues concerning children of the poor are more intense in the schools deemed of lesser value; significantly, the lesser-valued schools have the bigger task in this respect.

Links between social inequality and educational inequality can be explored in three main strands of the sociology of education and clarify important perspectives by which students from lower-income households are viewed. Firstly, functionalists explain the causes of inequality as being due to the malfunctioning of the agencies of socialization such as the home, community group or school (Douglas, 1964). In an approach called deficit thinking children from poor communities and the communities from which they come were viewed as deficient (Sugarman, 1970). The Coleman studies (Coleman et al., 1966) suggested that home factors contributed to the underperformance of working class children. In addition, Bernstein (1961) suggested a linguistic deprivation of working class children since their use of a restricted code compared to the elaborate code of the middle classes, limited their capacity for abstract thought. Interventions therefore had to correct deficits in the home, the community as well as in the children as they entered the school system.
In critique of this deficit view, Valencia (2010) claims that “many behavioural and social scientists hold the deficit thinking model in disrepute – arguing that it ignores the role of systemic factors in creating school failure” (p. 6). Keefer (2012) also critiques the deficit approach. Citing the work of Gorski (2008) and Ladson-Billings (2006), Keefer identifies elements of the “pathology” (p. 38) with which working-class children are accused and renders such an approach as overly biased, negative and unfair. This pathology suggests that the poor are lazy, do not care about the education of their children, are linguistically different and are abusers of drugs and alcohol.

The second strand of theory is Marxist in orientation and represents a conflict perspective to the genesis of social inequality (Feinberg & Soltis, 2004). Fundamental to this theory is the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) who advance a deterministic outlook regarding the hidden curriculum of the school as operating to shape different social classes differently. The hidden curriculum promotes acceptance of hierarchy, a subservient workforce, fragmented views of the world and motivation by external rewards. They propose that social status is the product of the social structure of the society and schools simply promote the social inequalities that exist in the wider society as the class structure reproduces itself by preparing the different classes for their respective roles in the economy. Students are viewed as cogs in a wheel and have little choice but to “toe the line”. The solution to the problem of inequality in this paradigm requires radical social transformation.

In contrast to the crude determinism of Bowles and Gintis (1976), other scholars (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977) leave more room for agency. The latter see schools as sites of contestation where teachers and students exercise agency and where there is room to resist the hegemony of class structure. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) additionally offer a cultural-capital theory whereby the dominant groups in the society impose their culture through schools constituting a challenge to working class children, thus “aiding and abetting the reproduction of social inequality and social exclusion” (Tzanakis, 2011, p. 76). Teachers are seen as complicit in this process of cultural reproduction.

While Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) recognize and affirm the cultural capital of lower-income families, Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) find both the cultural capital and material circumstances as important. While the language, education and values of the family are important, the ability to access books, health or extra supports is also critical and so both material and cultural factors work together to shape educational opportunity. Freire (1971; 2004) also recognizes the role of agency in this second strand and insists that the hegemony of class can be resisted by
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Valentine Lewis

pedagogy designed to help people win their freedom through a critical-
thinking process called conscientization.

The third strand, in postmodernist paradigm, includes symbolic
interactionism (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012) and differs from the
functionalist and conflict perspectives as it moves further away from
determinism and advances even a greater degree of agency to teachers and
students in the context of schools than that proposed even by the second
strand. Interactionist authors take account of the subjective states of
individuals and the meanings they attach to the unfolding events in their
lives (Becker, 1977; Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1971; Rist, 1970).

The exploration of teachers’ views as a significant research endeavour
connects with the interactionists who give primacy to subjective meanings
whereby, in short, “people behave based on what they believe” (Crossman,
2017, para. 2). A working assumption is that teachers actualize their
agency related to the perceptions of reality that they deem meaningful. For
schools to be effective instruments of empowerment, teachers’ views
matter: “beliefs, practices and attitudes...are closely linked to teachers’
strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life... shape
students’ learning environment and influence student motivation and
achievement” (OECD, 2009, p. 89).

A useful concept in this regard is that of self-efficacy which is defined
as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of
action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p.3). In
particular, teacher efficacy can be understood as “teachers’ belief or
conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who
may be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p.628). The
concept of teacher efficacy therefore includes the belief not only that the
teacher is capable of empowering but also that the potential of the learner
can be enhanced. Wilson and Conyers (2013) assert that among the key
elements that “enable students... to achieve their potential” (p.53), the
positive expectation of adults (parents, teachers and other caring people)
as to a child’s learning potential is critical. Teacher efficacy is not enough,
however, but achieving learning goals also requires an openness on the
part of the student to engage in the learning process (Bradshaw, 2010).

A study exploring the connection between teachers’ expectations and
their sense of responsibility for the learning of students from poor
backgrounds proved instructive (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004).
Findings indicated that teachers had lower levels of expectations and
consequently less acceptance of responsibility. The low level of
expectations generated by impressions conveyed by the wider society
became embedded in the organizational habitus of the school.
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Low expectations of the possibilities for student learning confirmed the self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992) which teachers operationalised in their classrooms. Positively, the study also revealed that where school leaders facilitated teacher reflection on practice, progress was made in tackling negative approaches by teachers toward students from low-income households.

While not discounting the importance of positive influence of teacher expectations for student achievement nor the occurrence of the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992), Chang (2011) asserts “it is not always the case that ‘you get what you expect’” (p. 200). Chang indicates that other factors are also needed for promoting student learning. Citing findings of a case study, he points out that misplaced beliefs about students (such as those pertaining to student autonomy) and inappropriate approaches to student learning and assessment can have deleterious effects on student outcomes.

The enhancement of learning potential not only entails belief in a child’s ability to learn but requires also the embodiment of appropriate teaching practices. Together with belief in their students’ capability, teachers “must act on that belief by creating a classroom environment that fosters potential that helps each student grow” (Wilson & Conyers, 2013, pp. 55-56).

In an educational setting, enhancing opportunities for learning also involve an enabling learning context. Wilson and Conyers (2013) thus define student potential as “the capacity for acquiring the knowledge and skills to achieve to a higher level of performance in any domain given the proper conditions for success [that] include effective instruction and support in a positive learning environment” (p. 53).

For achieving a positive learning environment, the affective element in teacher-student engagement seems critical. In a study carried out on teachers who themselves emerged from low-income households, the ability to connect (to empathise) with their students from similar backgrounds made a positive difference (Liggins, 2014). Teachers in that study believed that their backgrounds made them better equipped to teach students from low-income families “because they had personally been ‘in the same shoes’ as their students and had been successful themselves” (p. 100).

In addition, given the role that culture plays in students’ success at school (Bourdieu, 1973) and because they identified closely with the challenges that a culture of poverty (Payne, 2009) may pose for students, teachers in that study (Liggins, 2014) felt that they were sensitized to their students’ world and equipped to assist in overcoming obstacles and
gaining student trust in their efforts to promote the learning potential of their students. 

Findings from research linking social class and teacher understandings of students’ potential for achievement conducted in South Florida (Keefer, 2012), highlighted emotional support as the critical factor for students’ personal success. In practice, this entailed the provision of an emotionally safe learning environment, life skills and recognition of the positive elements of students’ backgrounds. The creation of such conducive learning settings cannot but engage and draw upon a teacher’s emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). There is a place here for the employment of differentiated learning strategies where students feel respected in their particular learning styles and where learning activities are crafted to connect with the actual needs of individual students (Tomlinson, 2014).

Educational administrators also play an important role in raising the performance of children from low-income families in less-valued schools. In a survey of several studies, Crawford-Patterson (2008) identifies seven common characteristics of successful leadership, namely, a good principal is “a strong educational leader” with “a focus on clear standards for improvement of results”, encourages “teamwork”, ensures that “teachers are... committed to help all students achieve”, sets “high expectations... for all students”, encourages “collaboration... among faculty and staff” and engages families to “reinforce classroom learning at home” (p. 11).

Attention to beliefs and actions to facilitate conducive learning contexts can enhance the learning potential of students toward the attainment of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.71). Flow refers to a state of learning fulfilment and joy characteristic of optimal learning experiences. For the attainment of flow, parents need to believe in a student’s potential and provide challenging opportunities toward growth. Csikszentmihalyi states that “almost all kids who are in flow frequently, their parents have very high expectations of them and they trust that they can do that. And they give them the opportunities” (edutopia, 2011).

The Funds of Knowledge (FOK) approach advances a corrective to the deficit view of students indicating that “missing from such a framework is the understanding that students, families, and communities are comprised not only of struggles, but also of strengths” (Sugarman, 2010, p. 97). The FOK paradigm, which has anthropological roots, adopts an “asset-based” understanding of marginalized groups (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Kinney, 2015) wherein the cultural knowledge of these groups become incorporated into culturally relevant curricula with implications for pedagogy (Rodriguez, 2013).

Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) and Messing (2005) confirmed from their studies, that pre-service students who were engaged in
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Ethnographic research in poor communities in which they had to conduct their teaching, experienced shifts in their assumptions about the children, their parents and the communities in which they lived. The outlook of the teachers was transformed from deficit model thinking to an asset-based one that could generate communication and a positive exchange of ideas, talents and assets between the home and school environment.

Implications for Teacher Education
The ability to challenge popular pathologies, deficit theorizing and dominant discourses about low income and marginalized groups is required within a paradigm of teacher education which promotes reflection and the development of teacher identity. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) recognize that the evolution of identity rests on the concept of self, the sets of roles and functions the teacher is called upon to execute and the set of images and expectations of what a teacher should be that is imposed by the wider society.

The research on FOK by Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, (2005) and Messing (2005) represents a new hopeful departure in the way teacher education programmes can be transformed wherein action research is employed to allow teachers to reflect on their beliefs, practices and their very identity, as they learn about the real lives of poor and marginalized students. Paulo Freire’s (1970) contribution on reflection and conscientization is congruent in this respect with the FOK approach.

Methodology
The methodological approach for this study is that of a qualitative case study (Yin, 2009) in which the views of teachers in an in-service professional development programme were collated and examined using grounded theory analysis in coding and the generation of themes (Charmaz, 2006). While the entire cohort of 56 teacher-participants were invited to participate, only a total of nine eventually participated in two focus groups in which semi-structured interviews were used. Of the nine teachers, three (Kathy, Adele and Parvati) teach at highly-valued schools, with Kathy, Adele and Gail having grown up in middle-income households while the others were from low-income households. Table 1 displays bio data pertaining to the respondents in this study.
During interviews, teacher-participants were asked explicitly to focus on students from low-income households and issues pertaining to these students’ learning. For example, one question from the interview protocol consisted of the question: “Can you describe any general features that you have come to associate with students of low-income households as to their learning ability?”

Findings were reprised and discussed in the light of ideas and previous research contained in the literature review.

Research questions were as follows:
RQ1: What are teacher-participants’ views of students from low-income households as to their learning potential?
RQ 2: How have teacher-participants responded to issues confronting students from low-income households as to their learning potential?
Rigour was established by way of continuous peer review, including feedback from a conference presentation, and subsequent refinement as an integral part of the research process. Data were reduced in collaborative fashion with the authors critiquing one another in the process of ascribing codes and themes. Discussion of findings in the light of the literature was carried out in the same manner.

In keeping with ethical principles, permission was gained from the nine teachers who participated, with measures to preserve anonymity, to use their verbal contributions for purposes of this research.

Discussion of Findings
Teacher-participants’ Views as to Students’ Learning Potential (RQ1)
Teacher-participants expressed various views relating to the learning potential of students from low-income households as relating to student school attendance, home environment, literacy and the expectations of educators.

Student school attendance
Absenteeism is viewed by the teacher-participants as a characteristic associated with students from low-income households that negatively affects their learning potential (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Absence from classes (including unpunctuality) is due to issues relating to meals, transportation, domestic responsibilities and financial need. School attrition (those who drop out of school prematurely) is also a matter of concern that teachers pointed out.

Gail, who teaches in a catchment area with many low-income households, shared that, “If there is no ‘box lunch’ [free lunch], they don’t come.” Additionally, Adele refers to students whose:

academic performance tend [sic] to dwindle away because they cannot leave home in the dark so they have to leave home when it’s early but at that time the traffic is at the maximum level so they reach to school after 9 or 10 o’clock in the morning.

Due to the demands of domestic responsibilities, Parvati gave an account of one of her students, who is frequently absent, and comes from a single parent family: “He has two younger siblings to babysit while his mum takes up another job and he is losing instruction.”

Another case of absenteeism centred on financial need as Gail recounts: “When he [student] came into form one, the father did not want to come and register him because he was working in Tobago. So, he spent a whole week or a month not being in school.”
Some students even drop out of school entirely. Shazaad shared that “they would come to school for the first few days of the term [then] you would see them working in some store.”

**Home environment**

In the teacher-participants’ views, student learning potential is affected by home conditions. Emotional support from parents, a culture of crime, a lack of respect for parents and teachers, value placed on education and a tendency to depend on others for financial support are some of the factors that teacher-participants view as influencing student learning potential.

In teacher-participants’ views, parental support was highlighted. Respondents opined that some parents did not render sufficient emotional support with regard to their children’s learning. Geeta who teaches in a school located in a district with many low-income households said that in households headed by “single parents, [or] grandparents, it was hard to get that parental support.” Elaborating on this point, Kathy claimed that “those [students] from wealthy backgrounds know their parents will come versus those from lower classes their parents will not even come to Parents’ Day. You see that link to parental support and their ability to do well in school.” The absence of parental support has been noted in the literature as to significantly contribute to the underperformance of working class children in schools (Coleman et al., 1966; Hanushek, 2016).

While Geeta and Kathy associate a lack of parental support with students of low-income households, Radha opines that such a perspective is not entirely consistent. Radha, who has experience of teaching in two separate and distinct catchment areas with many low-income households, lauded the positive parental support in her current situation: “when you have Parents’ Day all the parents show up as opposed to” her previous school. Radha’s current situation characterized by parental support provides a more conducive environment for the enhancement of Csikszentmihalyi’s optimisation of learning (edutopia, 2011).

According to Tessa, students of low-income households are sometimes involved in a culture of crime (Ryan et al., 2013) which contributes to an unstable learning environment with regular distractions:

*We have boys from gangs, that’s a big thing in our school. If two boys get in a fight “ah go bring mh father’s gun for you” and it has happened. We have a police station nearby and they’re always in our school.*

Shazaad expressed a similar view to Tessa’s but in addition, mentioned the presence of drug trafficking: “marijuana is a huge business and there are rival gangs who sell out [sic] each other...and this happens in our school on a weekly basis.” Both Tessa and Shazaad attest to situations
whereby involvement in the culture of crime contributes to regular disruptions to the learning environment. The occurrence of regular distractions can only augur negatively as to the development of the learning potential of students from low-income households and to building a culture of learning especially in the schools perceived of as less valued.

Some respondents were of the view that students of low-income households showed disrespect for parents and teachers. According to Shazaad, who teaches in a school less valued:

_You would be surprised that 12 and 13 years olds, boys especially, the parents have no control...the child is talking over the parent, talking louder, making excuses for their behaviour and the parent will be like “you see how he does talk to me?”_

Interestingly though, Parvati who teaches in a highly valued school did describe anti-social behaviours toward authority among some of the students from low-income households: “My school is in a different class altogether [sic] but there are some boys who give teachers real attitude and they don’t want to hear them and they [are] very disrespectful.” Disrespect toward parents and teachers as key agents of socialisation, interferes with the enhancement of a student’s learning potential as the very process of acquiring new learnings requires openness and humility toward those in authority capable of facilitating growth (Bradshaw, 2010).

Teacher-participants held views about the value that parents and students placed on education. Some students from low-income households were perceived as possessing a negative attitude towards education. Evidencing this view is Gail who shared that her students who were provided with Ministry of Education (MoE) school books came to class without them: “I don’t expect them to have text books. I ordered 20 and we now have three.”

On the other hand, another teacher-participant pointed out that some parents and students from low-income households did place high value on education, while others did not. Kathy said that:

_There are kids from the same background and they apply themselves. They have their battles at home and go on to win scholarships. I am not sure what is the difference between the kids that apply and the kids that sit back in a daze. I think it is the value placed on education._

While Kathy was unable to make sense of the difference in application, it may be that the students, having succeeded at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA– a selection exam into secondary school) continued in their schooling with a heightened self-esteem. Those who did not gain
entry in the highly-valued schools may experience quite the opposite as stated by Ryan et al. (2013) who underscores the “psychological trauma of a deep sense of failure” (p. 56) at the exam that has lasting effects on students.

There is also the opinion that some students expected the school to supply all their needs thus portraying a troubling culture of dependency (Deosaran, 2016). Radha stated that “as far as they [the students] are concerned, they are supposed to be provided with.” Shazaad shared that, in order to access the state’s social welfare grants, children must attend school and therefore “would come to school in the first two or three weeks, present the social welfare form and you won’t see them again for maybe the next year.” These cases seem to concur with findings from Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) who identify material and cultural capital deprivation as relevant factors impacting negatively on educational opportunity and thus the actualisation of student learning potential.

**Literacy**

Another view among teachers somewhat resonates with the view of Van Vechten (2013) who explores linguistic deprivation among people of low-income households. One teacher’s view is that students from low-income households do have literacy challenges such as being unable to use Standard English in writing and reading as with many other students but yet they are able to demonstrate a measure of communicative competence. That teacher named Carol mentioned that from her experience, students “are good at expressing themselves orally, not on paper, and, even though not in Standard English, they are good at getting [their] points across.” In this case Carol is not in denial about her students’ shortcomings with regard to their command of Standard English but focuses not on their lack, but on their strength. In this way she avoids a deficit perspective by acknowledging and affirming students’ ability to nevertheless get their points across in the way that they know best.

**Expectations of students by educators**

Geeta stated that her administration’s views on the learning potential of students displayed negative profiling in that “the administration did not actually encourage you to expect anything [from the students]”. Gail also recounted that one of her colleagues at her school tended to label students negatively “Miss, dem [sic] children can’t do IT [Information Technology] for CXC [Caribbean Examination Council] they don’t have the ability.” The problem with such manner of administration and teacher labelling is that it leads to less acceptance of teacher responsibility for student learning (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004).

Geeta, having gone through a period of exposure to the Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.), on reflection, admitted that her teaching style may
have negatively impacted on her perception of students’ learning potential: “Looking back now, I really did not believe that they [the students] were capable. I have revised that since I realised that it’s all about me and the techniques I used.” Geeta’s new understanding born of her reflection on her teaching practice was key to her professional growth (Messing, 2005).

In summarizing the data relevant to research question one (1) a variety of views were apparent. Some views of the teacher-participants tended to acknowledge the challenges of students’ life issues, whether in terms of material (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) or cultural deprivation (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977). Other views relating to students’ learning potential were more consistent with the symbolic interactionist (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012) and asset-based perspectives (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) in their focus on students’ capabilities.

**Teacher-participants’ responses to issues confronting students as to their learning potential (RQ2)**

Intervention initiatives, by both the administration and individual teachers, exist in schools to provide a more inclusive education for students from low-income households. Teacher-participants support administrative initiatives that include streaming with increased time for subjects, a more inclusive curriculum and pastoral care. Teacher-participants themselves outline a range of approaches to assist students of low-income households. These include establishing emotional bonds with students, improving self-esteem, offering voluntary remedial classes and implementing student-centred teaching strategies.

**Administrative initiatives**

*Streaming with increased time for particular subjects*

Streaming was also introduced as Geeta reported “they shuffled the classes, pulled out those who had the ability, [and] placed them into one class.” In addition, her administration not only offered fewer subjects to students in the 0 – 30 % test score range but also allocated more teaching time for those subjects: “We have seven periods of Maths, seven periods of English, one for conversational Spanish, while five are allocated for Social Studies”. The practice of streaming has been criticized by UNESCO (2009) who advocates for a more inclusive approach to education in that it ultimately promotes in society a greater degree of justice and wider citizen participation.

*A more inclusive curriculum*

The incorporation of disciplines in the schools such as the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA), Technical Vocational (Tech. Voc.), Physical
Education and other vocational possibilities not contained in the traditional grammar-school curriculum in teacher views was to be acknowledged and affirmed.

Tessa illustrated appropriately with her comment that at her school (less-valued): “We have an active VAPA department, young men interested in visual arts, we have dance... Sir wants to introduce Drama. We are the only school in the country that does PE for Form 6.” Similarly, in her less valued school at a remote seaside location, Gail lauds her principal who “sent a [group] of children to [pursue] their seaman’s certificate. They did very well. Miss [the Principal] want to get it in the curriculum.” Gail also shared that another initiative that is being developed at her school is “called Open School which is a joint [venture] with Caribbean Fisheries doing fish preservation [and] small boat repairs.” The provision of a wider curricular scope in both Tessa’s and Gail’s schools is congruent with the FOK approach that builds on the talents and resources of students in their setting (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Though the positive approach at Tessa’s school is acknowledged, the sustained implementation of the wider curriculum proved problematic. She lamented that due to lack of replacement of Tech. Voc. teachers who retired “there is no more AC [Air Condition] repairs, mechanical repairs. A lot of the footballers were into that and they were doing really well.”

**Pastoral care**

Teacher-participants explore pastoral strategies for assisting students from low-income households in the interest of achieving greater equity and for further enabling schooling to become an agent “for providing pathways out of poverty” (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p.7).

In some schools both staff and students donate cash and kind to assist students from low-income households. Parvati shared the following:

*We have a very active welfare committee and donations are done every day and our boys are pretty generous. We have community support, the principal, the administration, teachers who go out of their way and take out of their pocket.*

Respondents also noted that apart from material assistance, the pastoral care of students is also carried out by promoting a humanistic approach (Keefer, 2012). Gail notes that “the Principal emphasised love, to be safe... to know what kindness was”.

Shazaad observed that at his school: “There are two pastoral deans per year group, who liaise with the home to provide any assistance necessary”. He added:

*The majority [of students] are of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers have programmes in place in the*
classroom and if it is a case where we have to get student services involved or the social worker, they would do whatever is necessary.

Smaller class size can be advantageous for achieving better classroom management. With less students per class a teacher is afforded the opportunity to focus his/her energies more effectively. Carol, comparing her current teaching experience with that in her former school, shared that she was able to cope much better at the previous school where class sizes “were manageable because they were so much smaller.”

The above instances involving financial assistance, emotional support and a more manageable class size as vehicles of pastoral care were all seen as elements in the upbuilding of an inclusive learning context for the enhancement of student learning potential.

**Teacher-participant initiatives**

In continuation of the humanistic approach but now from the initiative of teachers themselves, there was acknowledgement that teaching approaches in the classroom needed improving. Kathy disclosed that “we have narrow cognitive goals. It is very certificate driven; teaching to the syllabus.” Keefer (2012), in his research, supports going beyond the cognitive domain by establishing emotional bonds especially when it comes to students from low-income households as indicative of the following cases.

With intent to encourage students facing challenges to persevere, Parvati was very open with her students: “I come from a lower socioeconomic background and a single-income household...I went through some tough times and [I] came out.” Here Parvati expresses sentiments in accord with the Liggins’ (2014) study whereby teachers themselves who emerged from low-income households felt that their experience better positioned them to assist students in the actualization of their learning potential.

Just as Paravati was able to empathise with the struggles of students from similar low-income households and harness this empathy in a helping relationship, Gail was able to identify with the struggle of students in the less valued school to the students’ benefit. Having herself attended a less-valued secondary school, Gail had high expectations for her students and encouraged them to remain steadfast because as she put it: “I was average, and I felt as if I got that push, so I pushed them to complete the syllabus as much as they can.”

Carol builds students’ self-esteem by recognising the pursuits they value such as their sporting performance. She says: “they looking for
reinforcement when they are coming to class. When they feel Miss recognize [that] ‘I am a cricketer and not just an environmental science student [they become] more to Miss’.”

Voluntary remedial classes are conducted. According to Adele “we devote half of our lunch time. They [students] get their lunch early and are there waiting so it's just a matter of us [sic] being there and they respond to it generally well.”

Teachers shared that they utilise student-centred teaching strategies. Tessa stated that: “We try group work so the ones who are brighter could help them [the others].” At Kathy’s school “they encourage us to use technology in the classroom…looking at the different types of learners,” while Shazaad stated that he tries to “to incorporate alternative assessment.” Geeta also values a more inclusive approach due to her experience over her professional development as she lauds “the Dip. Ed. learning about different learning styles, different teaching methods.” Gail also recommended the approach of differentiated teaching (Tomlinson, 2014), stating that “we have to figure out what to tap into when teaching”.

In summarizing the data relevant to research question two (2), a variety of responses to issues confronting students from low-income households came to the fore towards greater inclusive practices geared to enhancing student learning potential. Administrative initiatives aligned to a more inclusive curriculum with focus on FOK (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) and humanistic approaches (Keefer, 2012) were prominent. Teacher initiatives were overwhelming with a humanistic and pastoral focus (Liggins, 2014) and student-centred pedagogical strategies (Tomlinson, 2014).

**Recommendations**

Replacing any low expectations that spring from the pathologies about the poor and marginalized in the society is an ongoing duty. Teacher-participants’ views indicated awareness of “deficits” with which children of low-income households had to contend but did show remarkable sensitivity to the assets or strengths which students brought with them especially in the area of psychomotor and kinaesthetic abilities. It is recommended therefore that this awareness be strengthened in the Dip. Ed., *Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations)* course by developing in teachers, a way of engaging all students with an expectation of identifying their strengths and building on students’ positives in crafting learning experiences. The requirement to focus on each individual student can also be enhanced by the development of teacher expertise in differentiated classroom strategies so that they can
cater for individual learning needs. Apart from the academic subjects, viable options for alternatives should always be available.

Becoming reflective about their practice and conscious of the need for pedagogies which allow children from poor and low-income families to access learning opportunities in school is the mark of the conscientious educator. In this vein, there was an instance of real progress by Geeta in her change of attitude to students that came as a result of reflection on her work during the initial weeks of the Dip.Ed. programme. In this case teachers should be encouraged to habitually engage in reflection on their work so that improvements would be more likely to happen on a regular basis.

Some students from low-income households were perceived (as evidenced by Gail’s comments) as possessing a negative attitude towards education. However, it must be noted that students showed that with extra effort by teachers, change is possible. In Adele’s case, they indeed valued the education being offered to them in their reaction to teachers who took the responsibility of extending themselves in the light of the challenging social environment of their students. Therefore, there is potential to change a deficit view of parents and students as not valuing the education offered. Here the symbolic interactionists seem to have the edge that in focussing efforts on enabling relationships in the school context there is potential to effect change for the better. It is thus recommended that administrators promote an ethos of service among school staff in the interest of accommodating students’ learning that takes into account the peculiarities of the social context in which the schools operate.

In addition, Carol’s student appreciated her for recognising that student’s sporting ability and herein is an important cue. There is value in acknowledging the co-curricular activities where students shine as the student is validated in an arena apart from the classroom space. Teachers can thus pay attention to validating students by recognising and building upon student strengths to win them over to other pursuits in the interest of students’ holistic development.

If teachers and administrators are to be more than inadvertent perpetrators of social inequality in the classroom then consciousness of the workings of class bias in the school system is critical especially in a context of a stratified school system as in T&T. As teachers’ views tended not to incorporate much by way of analysis in the social reproduction strand, it is recommended that further consciousness be raised in this area in teacher education programmes. In the Dip. Ed. programme in particular, this is an area that can be exploited in the Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations) course.
Conclusion

While teachers did acknowledge the challenging situations experienced by students from low-income households, they, however, never profiled the students as inherently lazy or lacking ability to learn due to the students being from low-income households. In fact, many did refer to their own early backgrounds of hardship and offered their own experiences as motivation for their students.

Teacher-participants’ responses to the challenges associated with students from low-income households resonate with interactionist and asset-based views. The latter are more affirmative of students and identify a greater space for the agency of teachers as well as students in their power to determine access to schooling. They emphasise the agency and strengths of administrators and students by underscoring the potential of positive relationships in the school and incorporating talents possessed by students.

In the Dip. Ed. Programme, teachers do already possess sufficient openness to the “funds of knowledge” and “assets” possessed by students and their families. Granted this positive finding, such an affirmative disposition further developed would augur well for the success of teachers in their course of professional development.

References


Teachers’ Views of the Learning Potential of Students From Low-Income Households


SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE PROFESSION

Jamie L. Mc Cartney

People who work in social justice professions typically work with those who do not have a voice in the public square. Historically, these groups have been children, the aged, those poor and/or homeless, and the disabled, among others. This paper shows that those who interpret for deaf people should be classified as working in a social justice profession because its definition pertains to what sign language interpreters do. Social justice professions strive to give everyone a fair and equal opportunity in life, just as other groups enjoy. Although deaf people should be advocating for themselves, sign language interpreters do this de facto, as they get bombarded with questions regarding deaf people’s capabilities, get caught in the culture debate, and observe as discrimination of the deaf person abounds. This type of vicarious trauma can cause people in social justice professions to burn out. One hundred sign language interpreters were given a survey assessing their level of grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). The range of grit scores (1-5) was 2.33 - 4.75 (± 3.7, mode 3.33). Interpreters were also given qualitative questions regarding what drew them to the profession and what keeps them in the profession. Initially, only 49 got into the profession for social justice reasons, but now 70 interpreters listed social justice as the reason they continue to work in the profession. They are exhibiting what is known in the profession as ‘Deaf Heart’. Interpreters are coming alongside deaf people in order to help level the playing field.

Note to the reader:

Identity is very important within the d/Deaf community. This identification communicates to others how the individual chooses to associate: as a deaf person or as one who can hear. People who call themselves deaf may refer to word or spell it out in one of two ways. The first way is called capital or big ‘D’ Deaf, which refers to those individuals who follow norms, behaviours, and customs of the Deaf Culture in America. These individuals value things such as eyes, hands, American Sign Language, solidarity of the Deaf community, residential schools, information-sharing, and their collectivist culture (Humphrey & Alcorn,
The second way is called lowercase ‘d’ deaf, which means that the individual may sign, but choose not to associate with other d/Deaf people. An all-encompassing way in the literature to refer to those who may subscribe to Deaf Culture norms and those who do not is designated as “d/Deaf.” If the words are specifically used in this paper without the other category added, that is intentional, as only one of the specific populations of people is being referred to. Individuals who identify as hard of hearing prefer to align themselves with people who can hear and are not included with that designation of d/Deaf.

Introduction

When people are asked to think about social justice professions, they may think of those professions that work on behalf of people who cannot speak for themselves, either physically or because of a lack of power to do so. If they are able to speak out, they have historically not been able to get the right kind of attention to change anything about their situation. People in these types of groups include children, the aged, homeless people, disabled people, and so on. Sign language interpreting is not typically a profession that people would automatically associate with social justice.

There could be several reasons for this, but the main one certainly must be the fact that deafness and hearing loss are invisible disabilities (Braden, 2010; Disabled World, 2017; Invisible Disabilities Association, 2016; Tye-Murray, 2015). According to the Invisible Disabilities Association (2016), this label speaks to disabilities that “may not be obvious to the onlooker, but can sometimes or always limit daily activities, range from mild challenges to severe limitations and vary from person to person” (para. 6). Additionally, deafness is a low-incidence invisible disability, so it is unlikely that people think about d/Deaf much simply due to the fact that deafness and hearing loss do not occur that often (Tye-Murray, 2015). If the general public is not thinking of d/Deaf people and what their lives are like, undoubtedly, they are not thinking about their extension: sign language interpreters. However, anyone who has worked as an interpreter knows that tenacity is a necessity and that the barriers sometimes seem insurmountable.

Social justice refers to the overall fairness of a society and the manner in which it divides its rewards and burdens upon groups of people...Working with marginalized groups, social justice agents or advocates are concerned with bringing equality within society. (John Glenn College of Public Affairs, n.d., para. 1)
Social justice requires a high level of fortitude and a desire to level the playing field. Sign language interpreters work with d/Deaf people and, thus, are privy to the treatment they often receive. History teaches us that d/Deaf people have indeed been treated unfairly by their parents, friends, medical practitioners, and the whole of society.

This is not a new phenomenon; d/Deaf people have faced ill-treatment from the beginning of time. The treatment and education of d/Deaf people have been largely based on how they were viewed by society. In antiquity, females would commit infanticide if their child was deaf because this was thought to be a sign of sin (Etherington, 2014; Panda, 1999). Before the 1600s, deaf people were thought to be mentally retarded, demon-possessed, and ineducable. They were never included in society because of this. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), a leading Greek philosopher and scientist, said “those born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason…men that are born deaf are in all cases dumb; that is to say, they can make vocal noises but cannot speak” (Daniels, 1997, p. 1). This manner of thinking that equated deafness with a lack of intelligence continued into the 16th century. During those years, deaf people were restricted from owning property, inheriting land or money, and were labelled mentally insane (de Saint-Loup, 1996; Sacks, 1989). Some people attempted to educate deaf children, but only through lipreading and speech. However, starting in the 1600s, a handful of individuals were able to educate deaf people by using motions made with the hands. Even though it was in the latter 1700s when positive changes occurred to advance deaf people into the upper echelons of society, injustices did not cease. There was plenty of experimental testing that continued on into the 17th century, which involved doctors pouring hot fluid into patients’ ears, puncturing patients’ eardrum, or bleeding and leeching to ‘cure’ them of their deafness (Lane, 1989).

This maltreatment at the hands of the majority culture continued into the 1800-1900s. An individual who is not thought of as being an oppressor of deaf people is Alexander Graham Bell, undoubtedly for his great invention of the telephone. Bell was also a teacher of the deaf and a proponent of educating deaf people through speech and discouraging sign language. Although he had a mother who was hard of hearing and a wife who was deaf, Bell was a staunch believer that d/Deaf people should not marry other d/Deaf people. He noticed the numbers of those born congenitally deaf were higher when both parents were deaf. His stance on eugenics and his desire for a pure race culminated in a paper he wrote in 1883 entitled “Upon the formation of a deaf variety of the human race.” He went so far as to say that intermarrying and having children would lead to a “defective race of human beings [and that it] would be a great calamity
to the world” (Gannon, 1981, p. 75). Bell believed schools for deaf children only encouraged this type of intermarrying (Evans, Broido, Brown, & Wilke, 2017). At the infamous Conference of Milan in 1880 where the use of sign language was indubitably quashed for the better part of a 100 years, Bell was there adding his voice to the ones who wanted sign language vanquished (Rooted in Rights, 2017).

Between 1933 and 1945, oppression climaxed in Hitler’s Germany when the view was perpetuated that deafness, among other things, was going to pollute the German race. Thus, eugenics became a reality when d/Deaf people were forcibly sterilized and/or ordered to concentration camps or the gas chambers (Biesold, 1999; Dunai, 2002; Ridley, 2015; Ryan & Schuchman, 2002).

It has only been within the past 50 years in which the United States took notice of d/Deaf people and their ill-treatment. Recent developments which should have given d/Deaf people a hand up are the amount of legislation that came about starting in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement and continuing on until today. Legislation passed in the 1970s until the current time include the following: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; Public Law 94-142 (renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990); the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments; and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act. These legislations mandate that deaf people be treated differently and be given certain “helps”; however, d/Deaf people still run into institutionalized oppression and discrimination.

It is somewhat surprising that d/Deaf people would still be labelled as marginalized in the United States considering that this is the land of privilege “with liberty and justice for all” (4 USC §4, italics mine). These laws were seemingly passed to pave a better way for deaf people in terms of their education and rehabilitation. Although the legislation has helped moderately in the U.S., d/Deaf people are still marginalized and disenfranchised (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). This manifest itself in employment: the types and amount of employment that people get, unemployment, or underemployment. It also occurs in the strong-arming of agencies and professionals who do not feel they need to adhere to those legislations because they feel the laws do not apply to them and/or deaf people rarely litigate. Whereas d/Deaf people in other countries struggle for more basic needs, those in the United States mostly struggle with institutionalized discrimination and have been counselled out of the academic setting and into a vocation (Bowe, 2003). This can take the form of d/Deaf people struggling for fair job opportunities, wages, and communication access.
Video relay, which began in 2003, is another place where inequalities surface. People who are d/Deaf are also discriminated on phone calls because much of the time, they are calling people who are not deaf. People who are d/Deaf used to place a phone call by using a teletype machine, or TTY. The teletypewriter had couplers in which a regular telephone handset would fit into and convert beeps (when each key was struck) into letters, so deaf people could read it on the display. When d/Deaf people call places to request an interpreter, they are told quite often that the place has never hired one before, so they must not have to do it. Additionally, d/Deaf people are told many times that they need to bring their own “signer”.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is clear on the places where d/Deaf people have a right to request an interpreter. If places have over 25 employees and the venue is one where a person has a right to an interpreter, then the place has to pay, unless doing so would cause undue hardship. The number of employees for state and local government to comply with the legislation was initially 25; then, the number was lowered to 15. Currently, the law is that state and local governments must comply with the ADA irrespective of the number of employees places have (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). The U.S. Department of Justice (2014) states that,

The ADA requires that title II entities (state and local governments) and title III entities (businesses and non-profit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities. (para.2)

It goes on to say that a sign language interpreter is one of the acceptable ways to communicate with a d/Deaf person. People still buck the system and try to get around having to pay for an interpreter. This unfair practice often goes unchecked because of the reasons previously mentioned.

Even though these legislations require certain allowances, deaf people still struggle to find acceptance regarding their communication preferences. Although many d/Deaf people do not view themselves as disabled, the medical community does. These professionals, with due diligence, strive to “fix” deaf people by suggesting cochlear implants or auxiliary aids and by dissuading d/Deaf people and family members from learning sign language. They say this because they believe doing so will interfere with a child’s ability to learn English, even though that has been shown to be untrue (Clayton, 2015; Cummins, 2006; Marschark & Hauser,
Since those in the medical community have clout, their advice is often heeded. This has had a detrimental effect on d/Deaf people’s ability to access a first language and their ability to navigate their familial structures, friendships, and society.

Sign language interpreters spend a large percentage of their time, not only interpreting between individuals who are d/Deaf and those who can hear, but they spend an inordinate amount of time educating people who are not deaf. Interpreters answer questions dealing with the driving, working, and parenting abilities of deaf people, explain and justify their own role as the interpreter, and so on. The preference, far and away, would be for interpreters to just interpret these questions from the non-deaf person and the answers from the d/Deaf person. However, interpreters are often sought out when the d/Deaf person is not present and asked these questions. Partially, it must be due to the fact that the person who can hear feels more comfortable talking to someone else who is able to hear. People who are d/Deaf may not be comfortable asserting their rights or may not wish to cause conflict; thus, interpreters are often put in this position of educating and advocating. Advocating, according to Baker-Shenk (2014) is one who “listens to the concerns of the oppressed group and then advocates/speaks for them in the halls of power” (p. 7). This constant process of combating misconceptions with education can lead to burnout in the sign language interpreting profession (see Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; McCartney, 2004; Schwenke, 2012). It can also lead to vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) expertly explain the difference between these two. Whereas vicarious trauma is when a person feels like the injustice and abuse have happened to him/her personally, compassion fatigue is when the person has observed it so many times, that s/he becomes numb or jaded to it. Several authors have warned against the dangers of vicarious trauma as it relates to the sign language interpreting profession (Anderson, 2011; Andert & Trites, 2014; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Harvey, 2003; Macdonald, 2015). The ways in which vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue occur is talked about, so that interpreters can be proactive, as opposed to reactive.

Social justice entails working as an advocate in order to advance the status of the group as a whole. The only difference between sign language interpreting and other social justice professions is that interpreters should never speak out for the people; rather, interpreters should encourage d/Deaf people to speak out on their own behalf. Within the interpreting profession, this is termed functioning as an ‘ally’ (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). In the United States especially, speaking out for deaf people can be seen as one more oppressive act that deaf people have dealt with for
Sign Language Interpreting as a Social Justice Profession

centuries. This would only promulgate the exclusion of d/Deaf people and dismantle them of their rights.

The collaborative idea that is prevalent in social justice where the whole group is helped fits nicely with the collectivist culture. Those who subscribe to a collectivist culture would be termed “Deaf,” with the “d” being capitalized. For this group, American Sign Language (ASL), relationships with others who are like-minded, residential schools, eyes, hands, Deaf Culture, and solidarity are all valued (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011; Leigh, 2009; Mindess, 2014). This solidarity seeks to offer encouragement to deal with the institutional oppression that occurs at the hands of the individualistic mainstream. Because Deaf Culture is not the prevailing culture of the United States or any country in the world for that matter, it is not typically highly regarded or realized by those in the larger culture. “By assuming one normative way to do things (move, speak, learn, and so forth), society privileges those who carry out these functions as prescribed and oppresses those who use other methods” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 242).

Another aspect of working in social justice is “... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity” (Toowoomba Catholic Education, 2006, para 1). It would be helpful if deaf people were seen as being members of a linguistic minority, as opposed to a disability group. The United Nations has a charter to protect individuals who are of a different linguistic minority: The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992). Most people do not consider deaf people to be included in this group (United Nations Charter, 47/135). It seems that because most people in power do not understand the language, they continue to label deaf people as disabled. Those who are d/Deaf cannot get out from under this oppression and, thus, choose to call themselves disabled in order to receive financial assistance from the government. It is an iterative process.

As opposed to being viewed as one of the subsets of the broad term disability, Eckert (2010) and others have suggested that an ethnic group comprised of Deaf people be examined. In light of how the ancient Greeks defined ethnos and how current day Smith (as cited by Eckert, 2010) defined ethnic groups as having a “collective name, myth of common descent, a shared history, a shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity” (Smith, as cited by Eckert, 2010, p. 317), it makes sense. This push for Deaf people to embrace the concept of “Deafnicity” is to counteract the oppression, microaggressions (Sue, 2010), and audism that d/Deaf people experience daily.

Further research shows that characteristics that enable people to be recognized as having a distinct ethnic group includes a collective name,
feeling of community, norms for behaviour, values, knowledge, kinship, customs, social structure, language, art forms, and history (Lane, 2005). Deaf people fit into this category like any of the other groups. Many of the requisites above are predicated on the fact that Deaf people subscribe to a different culture: a collectivist culture (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Mindess, 2014).

Audism is a term coined by Tom Humphries who is Deaf. He defined it as the “notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or to behave in the manner of one who hears” (Humphries, 1977, p.12). It is used to describe someone who makes decisions or comments that demonstrate his/her belief that hearing is better and more valued than not hearing. People who are d/Deaf do not only face discrimination in the educational realm, but they experience it everywhere: in the public square, in their workplace, with their healthcare, and in the legal/criminal justice setting. Just like people who are able to hear, deaf people go about their daily lives interfacing in public. They go to stores and social events; they make phone calls and go to appointments. However, people who are d/Deaf do not have the same luxuries that people who can hear have. Within the profession and the Deaf Community, this is called ‘hearing privilege’ (Feminist Technology Collective, 2014; Nelson, 2012; The Goodwill Project, 2017). People who are able to hear do not understand the benefits they enjoy simply because they speak the language of the majority culture. They are able to go to public places at any time without alerting the place that they are coming and are able to take full advantage of whatever the place has to offer. They also do not need to alert amusement parks or movie theaters in advance in order for them to prepare for them. When they fly, they may roll their eyes at the flight attendant’s spiel; however, d/Deaf people have never heard it. They see gestures from the flight attendant, but it is hardly linguistically commensurate.

Interpreters feel their profession is social justice because these audist acts are insensitive. This would be just as insensitive as a committee who decided to have a meeting on the second floor of a building with a non-working elevator when a physically disabled person was a part of their committee. The deaf experience can many times be summed up by a lack of inclusivity and an inability of the majority to see what the world would be like as a d/Deaf person. These ideas show up in policies where d/Deaf people who have to pass a speech and hearing test in order to be a teacher in a public school in some parts of the United States. Deaf people can obviously work at a residential school, but many times face a closed door when they attempt to teach hearing students in a public school through the use of a sign language interpreter.
There are four ways into the deaf community; thus, four ways an interpreter can be involved with social justice and d/Deaf people. These ways are called the Avenues to Membership in the Deaf Community (See Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980, to see a diagram of these avenues) and consist of the following: social, political, audiological, and linguistic. Social entails the amount of time that d/Deaf people get together with other d/Deaf people or with those who care about the Deaf Community. The political avenue speaks to the level that an individual would go to support d/Deaf people politically, either through laws, legislation, or lobbying. This is place where interpreters can be very involved in waging the social justice war as an ally for deaf people. The audiological avenue is the amount of hearing loss an individual has. The linguistic avenue is the amount of skill/expertise that a person has with sign language. Surrounding the intersections of these avenues of membership is the word attitude. People who are d/Deaf appreciate those who have a good attitude. Individuals who perhaps are not as strong in one of the avenues may be chosen to work with d/Deaf people because of the individual’s good attitude. Sign language interpreters (who are able to hear) will never be in the core of the Deaf community assuming they are high in every other avenue, due to the fact they do not possess audiologic loss.

Historically, people who take power away from d/Deaf people are those who are not d/Deaf. These people do this out of their own ignorance, misunderstanding, or misconception about d/Deaf people. Many of these misconceptions centre on people’s perspective of deafness. There are two mindsets which people can hold toward deafness. One perspective is the medical view, which asserts that deafness is indeed a disability and something to be fixed. The deaf people in this group would try to blend in as much as possible with the larger culture by using their voice, reading lips, trying to hear, and appearing as “normal” as possible. The other mindset is the cultural view. This perspective embraces deafness and regards it not as an impairment, but rather a linguistic minority with its own distinct culture. This culture is much different from those who are able to hear.

Interpreters, as well as others, can support deaf people and not oppress them by respecting how they identify. If Deaf people prefer to identify as culturally deaf, then that should be respected. We should understand that means that these people would prefer not to be labelled as hard of hearing or as people with a hearing loss. For these people, they would use ASL (in the case of the United States and parts of Canada) and these individuals are culturally proud of their collective accomplishments. The contention between these two mindsets has been the cause of much angst, oppression, and disagreement for d/Deaf people.
Those who can hear need to see themselves not as benefactors to d/Deaf people, but as equals in this society and societies around the world. Perhaps if they did, sign language interpreting would not be viewed as a social justice profession, but rather a profession that works with people who just so happen to use a different first language and have a different culture. Deaf people can make significant contributions to our society, at large, and our institutions, in specific. However, Pena, Bensimon, and Colyar (2006) contend that people’s lack of knowledge regarding another’s culture may unwittingly stymy the oppressed individual from succeeding. This is where the social injustice starts.

Objective/ Purpose of the Study
The author felt that those involved with social justice professions, namely sign language interpreting, would need to possess tenacity. The constant discrimination and oppression can be physically and emotionally onerous to witness. Fortitude and tenacity are required characteristics for social justice work, as well (Clauss-Ehlers, 2010). This works in tandem with a recent research interest of the author: Grit. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) define grit as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 1087). It is comprised of two traits: perseverance of effort and consistency of interest. Grit is also synonymous with persistence, fortitude, and zeal. It can also mean determination and a willingness to persevere when an individual faces an obstacle. Within sign language interpreting, challenges present themselves all the time. The way interpreters deal with these challenges can make or break an opportunity for a d/Deaf person, interpreters themselves, and the interpreting profession at large.

Research Questions
McCartney (2016) conducted a study whereby 100 sign language interpreters were surveyed regarding their grit level. In addition to the quantitative information, the researcher also queried respondents for qualitative information. Qualitative analyses were assessed for the reasons interpreters gave for the following: 1) their reasons for initially choosing sign language interpreting as a profession, and 2) reasons that kept them motivated to continue working in the profession. Since interpreters are privy to vicarious trauma and oppression, the researcher felt that these interpreters must have other reasons that sustained them, specifically a commitment to social justice, within the profession. It was thought that
these reasons and a high grit score would prevent an interpreter from getting out of the profession.

Data Collection Methods
The researcher presented respondents with the 12-item Grit Scale by Duckworth et al. (2007). This is a Likert-type self-report questionnaire designed to assess an individual’s level of grit. This questionnaire has high validity and internal consistency of $\alpha=.85$. Plus, the questionnaire is easy to take and does not require a long-time commitment on the part of the respondent. Sample questions are as follows: “I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.” “New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.” “My interests change from year to year.” Respondents are given five options to every one of the twelve possible questions: “Very much like me” “Mostly like me” “Somewhat like me” “Not much like me” and “Not like me at all” (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Out of the twelve questions, respondents can get a maximum of 60 points. When questionnaires are rated, the final score is divided by twelve and respondents are left with a score as high as 5. That score would indicate that the individual was exceptionally gritty, a score of 2.5 would be medium grit, and anything lower than that would be considered a low grit score.

The researcher coded respondents’ answers to the qualitative research questions and grouped them into the following categories: familial reasons, intellectual reasons, societal/social justice reasons, and monetary reasons. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they had a family member who was d/Deaf, the researcher coded that as a familial reason. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they liked the challenge or were good at learning languages, the researcher coded that as an intellectual reason. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they wanted to be involved with social justice or felt that d/Deaf people were treated unfairly and they wanted to help level the playing field, the researcher coded that as a societal/social justice reason. Finally, if respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they liked or needed the compensation, then that was coded as a monetary reason.

In addition to that, each answer was also grouped into one of two categories: extrinsic or intrinsic reasons. For example, if respondents stated that they got into the profession because they liked the language, then that would be an intrinsic reason. However, if respondents stated that
they were told by other people that they were good at using the language (ASL), then the researcher coded that as an extrinsic reason. These types of groupings allowed the researcher to look at respondents’ answers within several different categories to see what their motivations were for getting and staying in the profession of sign language interpreting.

Results
Respondents in the study demonstrated medium to high grit. The range of Grit scores (1-5) was 2.33 - 4.75, with the mean being 3.7. The mode was 3.33 and there were eleven people that had that score. There were 90 females (mean score of 3.55) and 10 males (mean score of 3.04). Those numbers are obviously nonsignificant since the groups were not of the same size. Once it was determined that respondents mostly had medium to high grit, the focus then turned to the qualitative questions. One of the statistically significant results from the study dealt with the societal/social justice category. Specifically, only 49 people who initially chose interpreting did so for societal/social justice reasons. However, seventy (70) people listed societal/social justice as the reason they were still motivated to interpret. The 42.9% change is extremely heartening. It shows that in this particular study, respondents were concerned with how d/Deaf people were treated by others and that the respondents were trying to combat that injustice. Instead of allowing their frustration to chase them out of the profession, they were just as passionate as ever to even the scales.

Summary
The sign language interpreting profession is primarily a social justice one since interpreters deal with institutionalized discrimination and oppression by virtue of being present when d/Deaf people need an interpreter. Interpreters are in high demand and the work is plentiful. They often go from one oppressive assignment to another, educating and advocating all the while. Interpreters are on the front line of fielding careless comments and experiencing vicarious trauma because of their unique position. It is beneficial for interpreter educators to prepare students for this profession, give them tools to cope, and let them know this profession deals with social justice. Sign language interpreting and social justice require someone to be strong physically, mentally, and emotionally. It cannot be done in isolation.

Regardless of how d/Deaf people choose to label themselves, society owes it to them to at least try and advance their position and upward
Sign Language Interpreting as a Social Justice Profession

mobility. These barriers that structural discriminatory practices have put in place are themselves handicapping. Allowing d/Deaf people to have a seat at the table in order to educate and share academic space would help to diversify the type of people who wield power and would certainly promulgate the “justice as transformation mindset” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 116). It would give administrators a chance to eradicate hegemonic and discriminatory practices at their respective institutions. This small change would endorse “equity-mindedness” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 64), as opposed to “deficit-mindedness” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 75) and allow d/Deaf people to be viewed as equals. These deficits have been on-going and are destructive.

Two necessary traits sign language interpreters need to have, other than grit, is that of Deaf-Heart and leadership. The Deaf-Heart Movement has surfaced in recent years as a way for d/Deaf people to discuss what an interpreter needs to do in order to be successful within the ASL/English Interpreting profession. If an interpreter does not act culturally sensitive, is not successful as an interpreter, or cognizant of the struggles that d/Deaf people have had to endure, this tends to be the reason in the minds of Deaf people: the interpreter did not have DEAF-HEART1 (Colonomos, 2013; Decker, 2015). This means that the interpreter had no concept of the d/Deaf experience; was not mindful of what d/Deaf people need in order to communicate; was not an ally to the Deaf community, and so on. Within the last couple of years, a common complaint was that interpreters had lost Deaf-Heart. That mindset was not borne out in this particular study as respondents felt very strongly that societal/social justice reasons motivated them to remain in the profession. It seems interpreters in this study do understand the d/Deaf experience and they stand with d/Deaf people to petition the majority for equal opportunities and equal rights.

The second requisite trait that interpreters need to have is that of leadership in order to “empower clients” (Chung & Bemak, 2011, p. 159). Coyne (2013) contends that interpreters do need leadership in order to bring about social justice while working as a sign language interpreter. He encourages interpreters to employ transformational leadership as its “goal … is to empower others” (para. 28). That resonates with many tenets of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Specifically, tenet 4.4 states that interpreters should “facilitate communication access and equality and

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1 This convention of writing out words in all capital letters is the way that glossing in American Sign Language is done. This means that there are signs for each of these words and the words function as a compound, meaning that the two signs work together to mean one thing.
Jamie L. McCarthy

support the full interaction and independence of consumers” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005).

Social justice is broad and incorporates many professions that try to elevate the conditions of a group or groups of people. Sign language interpreters share many elements of this work in that deaf people are a disenfranchised and oppressed group of people. Although there have been many advancements in the United States, d/Deaf people still experience institutional discrimination and misconceptions. The impetus behind this contention is in large part due to how people who are d/Deaf view themselves and how others perceive them. It goes back to the disagreement between the two mindsets: the medical view and the cultural view. Deaf people who are culturally deaf and proud to subscribe to a different culture are not understood by the general populace. Interpreters strive to clarify these ubiquitous misconceptions that people hold by constantly educating. They may also be engaged in social justice by attending social events, using ASL, and being involved in political protests and fight to have legislation passed that would advance the status of d/Deaf people. Interpreters experienced a high level of tenacity, or grit in this study. On a scale of 1-5, the mean of interpreters’ grit level was 3.7.

The study (McCartney, 2016) applied the construct of grit to the signed and spoken language literature. No studies had been conducted until that point that combined the construct of grit with sign language interpreting. This study is not proposing that someone with a low level of grit cannot be successful. Medium to high levels of grit may, however, allow interpreters to remain in the profession when hardships come, instead of succumbing to burnout. Also, in this study, the reasons interpreters gave for remaining in this profession and engaging in this work was social justice. They displayed a promising amount of Deaf-Heart.

References


Sign Language Interpreting as a Social Justice Profession


EDUCATING ERIC Q:  
A Student with an Emotional-Behavioural Disability in an  
Inclusive Education System  

Lemoy Petit-Hunte

This qualitative study adopted a social ecological approach to explain the support structures that were in place to mediate the education needs of Eric Q, a student with an emotional-behavioural disability in a general education classroom, at a primary school in Trinidad and Tobago. That exploration also gave light to how the supportive elements were being used. Purposeful sampling was used to select the eight participants and data used in the analysis were from interviews, observations of lessons, and a questionnaire. A Semantic Differential Scale was used with Eric. The findings indicated the presence of elements of support, but an absence of (a) teacher professional development related directly to managing Eric’s challenging behaviours, (b) a positive partnership between the school and Eric’s home, (c) motivational supports to Eric in the classroom, (d) a broad-based approach to the provision of social work support, and (e) a lack of teacher self-efficacy for educating Eric in the general education classroom. The insights gained from the study can sensitize a range of stakeholders in education, within a Trinidad and Tobago context, to issues that may need to be addressed for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Introduction

Globally, educators are faced with a worrisome growth in the occurrence and classroom manifestation of challenging and disruptive behaviours that impede instruction and student learning, as well as a rapidly accelerating number of students who are failing to develop reading competency; many
of those students have been identified as having an emotional-behavioural disorder (EBD) (Kamps & Tankersley, 1996; Trout, Nordness, Pierce, & Epstein, 2003). Educating students identified as having an EBD in the general education classroom is perhaps one of the most complex and daunting task for teachers and one of the most difficult challenges facing public education today (Osher, Osher, & Smith, 1994; Trout et al., 2003). The changing intensity and growing number of children in public schools who have an EBD have created an urgent need for educators to develop a fundamental conceptualization of how to meet socio-emotional, academic, and behavioural needs of those at-risk students, and broaden their understandings of support for meaningful inclusion (Forness & Kavale, 2000; Trout et al., 2004).

While almost all teachers in general education classrooms have at least one or two students who have an EBD, and while inclusive education can serve to effectively educate those students, that success is dependent upon the provision of appropriate support (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004). Nevertheless, the literature reviewed articulated issues that emerge out of a lack of provision of professional development opportunities, clear communication of higher expectations for teaching students with EBD, social work services, motivational supports, and home-school partnership which are key support structures required for meaningful inclusion of this at-risk student population.

**Inclusive Education**

Throughout the world, many definitions of inclusive education have emerged that range from “a set of principles which ensures that the student with a disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the community in every respect” (Uditsky, 1993, p. 88) to, extending the scope of ordinary schools to include a greater diversity of children (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 1995). Within the last thirty years, there has been a growing consensus among policy makers in education fields that all children have the right to be educated together. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) which posited that all children with disabilities have the right to receive their education in the least restrictive environment, and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) which asserted that general education classrooms should accommodate all children regardless of their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, linguistic or other conditions, promote principles of inclusive education.

By the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, general education was considered by policy-makers in non-Caribbean countries to be the least restrictive environment for all learners. That thinking gave rise to the
provision of support services into the regular classroom, and the provision of a continuum of support became the principle for successful inclusive education (Villa & Thousand, 2003). The Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago followed international trends in the key objectives of establishing as priorities accessibility to educational opportunities for all children, and the delivery of quality education to citizens, at all levels of the education system. In seeking to effect those priorities, the Student Support Services Division was established to provide on-going support to all students in the education system wherever needed. Local initiatives of inclusion were situated within the Ministry of Education’s reform and Seamless Education approach which was designed to facilitate all learners from Early Childhood Care and Education to tertiary education, inclusive of those like Eric Q who might otherwise be marginalized.

**Eric Q: A Brief Description**

Eric Q had reportedly been exhibiting externalizing behaviours for seven years. He reportedly demonstrated the following behavioural characteristics to the extent that they were significantly apparent at both his school and home during that period of time:

- Fighting, hitting others
- Blaming others for his actions
- Destroying property
- Becoming angered, annoyed, and upset easily
- Agitating and provoking his peers to a level of verbal or physical assault
- Making inappropriate comments to others, for example, students and teachers
- Bothering other students who are trying to listen or work
- Not resolving conflict situations appropriately
- Grabbing things away from others
- Indicating that no one likes him and no one cares about him
Failing to work appropriately with peers

• Becoming physically aggressive with teacher

Due to the nature of these characteristics, Eric’s disability was categorized as a conduct disability. His word recognition, reading comprehension, and overall reading level were two years below his then current class level. While Eric could successfully be educated within a system of inclusion, certain support structures had to be in place to make his inclusion meaningful.

**Purpose of the Paper**

This study was done to describe the service provided for Eric under inclusive education and proposed to do so by determining what supports for meaningful inclusion were in place at Eric’s school, and how the supports were being used. The objectives of this paper are twofold, namely to (1) identify the supports present at the participating school and (2) describe how the supports were being used.

**Delimitations of the Study**

The investigation was delimited to eight participants and one primary school located in Trinidad.

**Significance**

This small-scale study can serve to enhance understandings of the kinds of support structures and networks needed for the meaningful inclusion of one of the most challenging categories of students, and can sensitise teachers, school administrators, and policy-makers at the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago to issues that may need to be addressed for successful implementation and maintenance of inclusive education.

**Theoretical Overview**

Inclusion is not just a school issue; it extends to the communities in which the children and their families live. Inclusion is not only a disability issue but is built on the premise that all children are members of families, communities, and a general society that contribute toward the shaping of their character; the conditions of which often influence their behaviours at school (Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005). Educator’s beliefs about inclusion influence its implementation, and the perceptions of families, teachers, and administrators about inclusion.
Educating Eric Q

influence how inclusion practices are planned and carried out (Wagner et al., 2005). Thus, what emerges as important in exploring inclusion practices is to be explicit in discussing the stakeholders’ perceptions at all levels of the student’s environment. Social ecology is a theoretical framework that provides for a study of people in an environment and the influences on one another (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Rinderle, 2006). Oetzel and colleagues add that this framework allows for the integration of multiple levels and contexts to establish the “big picture” (p.126). A socio-ecological orientation, as it pertains to educating children with EBD, provides the foundation for this kind of interaction among various subsystems.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory was most aligned with the contextual background, problem, and purpose of this study, and facilitated the exploration not only of Eric’s perceptions based on his experience of support but allowed the voices of key stakeholders at different levels of his network to be heard. Bronfenbrenner posited that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. Ecological systems theory describes the environment in terms of four levels - macro-system, exo-systems, meso-systems, and micro-systems (Bronfenbrenner). Micro-systems refer to the relationships between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family. Meso-systems refer to the organizational factors that shape the environment within which interpersonal relations occur, for example, the relations between Eric’s home and the school in which he was a member. Exo-systems comprise the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that directly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the person lives. For Eric, an example of this was the relationship between his home and his mother’s workplace, while for his mother, an example was the relation between Eric’s school and the neighbourhood peer group. The macrosystem is composed of the overarching pattern of the other subsystems that are characteristic of a given culture, with particular reference to the beliefs systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, hazards, and opportunity structures that are embedded in each of these broader systems (Brofenbrenner).

The Literature Review

Students with Emotional-Behavioural Disability (EBD)
Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1982) defines EBD as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which adversely affects educational performance:

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intelligence, sensory or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
6. The term may also include children who have schizophrenia. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Section 300.7 (c) (4) (i)).

To be eligible, the student must have a problem in at least one of the aforementioned areas, to a marked degree, and to the point that it adversely affects educational performance (intensity), over a long period of time (duration), in two different settings, one of which is the school (pattern) (Forness & Kavale, 2000; Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Students with EBD can be grouped into two categories that tend to overlap; internalizing and externalizing disorders (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000). Coleman and Vaughn refer to externalizing behaviour as being “uncontrollable, aggressive, acting out, and conduct disorder” (p. 25).

Children with EBD were historically treated within restrictive community and school settings through the use of behavioural-change procedures commonly used with children classified as being mentally ill. In spite of the representation of EBD as a single federal grouping of educational disability, students with EBD may possess a range of educational and social issues (Wagner et al., 2005; Walker, Zeller, Close, Webber, & Gresham, 1999). In the dimension of conduct disability, (a multivariate of teacher-rated behaviours such as disobedience, aggression, and irritability), students identified as EBD far exceed their peers without EBD across all grade levels and across genders (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Wagner et al., 2005).
Inclusive Education and the Education of Students with EBD

Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2002) stated “inclusion is seen to involve the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation and the maximizing of resources to support learning participation” (p. 13). When applied to education, inclusion is primarily about responding to student diversity, respecting differences, being open to new ideas, and empowering all levels of stakeholders (Booth et al., 2002; Carrington, 1999). Hegarty (2001) describes inclusion as a process whereby the school reforms its curricula and organizational provisions in response to students’ individual differences. Stockall and Gartin (2002) and Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) similarly opine that inclusion implies a sense of acceptance of all students. That process is often viewed as having more to do with principles of teacher attitude and response to individual differences than with specific instructional configurations. Such thinking has led to concentrated emphasis on physical placements and affective components with neglect of other aspects of the educational process (Stockall & Gartin, 2002; Voltz et al., 2001).

Generally, students with an emotional-behavioural disorder have been found to perform less well academically than their peers who have learning disabilities, and those who do not have disabilities (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003). Sutherland, Copeland, and Wehby (2001) reported that in the classroom setting, teachers provided less direct instruction to students identified as high aggressors, and such students received less attention educationally. The prominent idea was that the behaviour of students with EBD needed to be controlled before they could be taught, therefore placing less emphasis on their academic needs (Wehby et al., 2003). Without knowing the challenges and strengths of students with EBD within specific content and skill areas, it was difficult to know what interventions were necessary to improve educational outcomes (Trout et al., 2003). Additionally, the limited attention given to their academic needs created a major gap in understanding how to meet the academic needs of this at-risk group, resulting in outcomes of high rates of absenteeism, and low grade-point averages (Trout et al., 2003).

If all children should learn together, then the diverse needs must not only be recognized, but there must be some proactive response to meeting those needs. Nevertheless, school systems, in many cases, do not individualize programmes for special needs students (Sutherland et al., 2001). Consequently, these students generally do not receive the special attention they need and to which they are entitled within inclusive
education (Sutherland et al., 2001; Trout et al., 2003). What thus occurs is actually descriptive of exclusionary practices.

Motivation as Support
Bai (2006) defines motivation as “an internal state that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction” (p. 7). The behavioural and academic challenges that students with EBD present require teachers who are motivated to work with this population of students and place an onus on schools to provide ongoing motivational supports to teachers. In school settings, teachers exhibit both internal and external motivation. Internal motivation includes their personal values and beliefs that they use to decide what they want to achieve, while external motivation is acquired over time. This is influenced by their accumulated experiences, interactions with others, education, training, and environment (Bai, 2006; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). To motivate students, it is important for school administrators to motivate teachers to accept responsibility for student learning. Teachers who are motivated exhibit efficacy, goal setting, and persistence. For struggling learners (like many students with EBD), one of the keys to success is having teachers who can motivate them to believe that they can succeed (Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). If students with EBD are to rise to the expectations of higher standards, the kinds of motivation that teachers provide can be critical to their academic success (Alderman, 2004).

Expectations for Teaching Students with EBD
Teachers often identify students with EBD as the least desirable to have in the classroom and many are uncertain about how to best serve students at risk for learning and behaviour problems (Lane, Gresham, & O’Shaughnessy, 2002; Wagner et al., 2005). Hayling, Cook, Gresham, State, and Kern (2008) state that burdensome class sizes, confusing role expectations by school administrators, and a lack of administrative support have been identified by teachers as examples of negative experiences they have encountered in attempting to educate students with EBD in general classrooms. Hayling and colleagues as well as Trout et al. (2003) stress that support from school leaders, in treating with an at-risk category of students perceived as in need of more individualized and intensive services, is critical.

It is important for teachers to convey clear expectations to their students. Central to improving student outcomes for low-performing students are the provision of clear expectations for instruction and student learning, and dedicating resources to build the knowledge and skills of
Educating Eric Q

Within inclusive education, school administrators are expected to provide teachers with the support of well-defined expectations for improving the performance of students with EBD (Wehby et al., 2003). Teacher professional development plays a key role in that support system.

Professional Development as Support

Although teachers generally support high standards for teaching and learning, many are not prepared and need additional support to implement effective teaching practices based on high standards. Sawka, McCurd, and Mannella (2002) and Sutherland et al. (2001) described the academic performance of students with EBD as inversely related to their antisocial behaviour. Those researchers similarly suggested that teachers need professional development training for specific instructional and behaviour management strategies that are designed to improve students’ academic and adaptive skills. Sutherland et al. (2001) emphasized the perceptions that students have of teachers and administrators can impede student learning and impact their behaviour in the classroom. In addition to the use of professional development supports, teachers also need support in understanding the importance of how they are perceived by their students. In more effectively addressing challenging behaviours of students with EBD, working hand-in-hand with the provision of professional development, is ready access to and use of the services of support personnel such as those provided by school social workers (Sutherland et al., 2001).

The Social Worker’s Role

Over the last twenty years, educators have highlighted the growing need for expanding traditional school services to accommodate the needed comprehensive and coordinated services to students and their families through social work services (McKinnon 2001). The increasingly volatile nature of family structures and communities has affected a growing awareness that there are significant numbers of students at risk in the educational process due to their social context. McKinnon and colleagues posited that the child and the structure of his relationships outside of school have a marked influence on his or her performance in the classroom, hence the need for coordinated and comprehensive services to the child and his family through social work services.

Wagner et al. (2006) suggested that the school social worker should be placed at a critical point in the natural ecology of the child, his or her family, and community. The social worker, working collaboratively with
teachers and parents, contributes greatly toward more effective educational practices for at-risk or disadvantaged students (Constable & Walberg, 1988; Frey & Nichols, 2003; Hare, 1988; Wagner et al., 2006). This is descriptive of a socio-ecological model in which the social worker strives toward the development of the child’s personal control over his or her own life through improving the quality of interactions between the child and his social environment. The collaborative interactions between the service providers and families, while increasing the visibility of the social worker in the classroom, simultaneously enhance the likelihood of positive change in the education of children with EBD (McKinnon et al., 2001; Wagner et al., 2005).

Family Support Systems

The primary mean to supply human needs is expected to be provided by the most important of all mediating systems; the family. Constable and Walberg (1988) reported that children with EBD are put in a better position to cope with the complexity of life through the networking of families, support systems, and schools. Whereas, traditionally, some schools have exhibited rejection of parents in a variety of ways, many schools have begun to move away from a narrow focus on the child as an individual to consider the child as a member of a family unit. Any dominant attitude of rejection of the child’s familial background is commonly passed on to the child, and when cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of families prevent students from performing well, or developing a positive attitude toward their school experience, strong support of home becomes critical if children are to succeed in school (Bardi, 1998; Constable & Walberg, 1988).

Krueger (1994) described the curriculum of the home as the kinds of informed parent-child dialogues about everyday events, the monitoring of television and peer activities, discussions of leisure reading, encouragement, expectations of affection and interest in the child as a person and in his academic achievement. Krueger further asserts that this home curriculum is commonly much more predictive of academic learning than characteristics of, for example, socio-economic status of the family. Constable & Walberg (1988) supported calls for moves toward school interventions aimed at strengthening home-school relationship as such moves create the potential for significant positive effects on students’ learning and behaviour, especially in the early grades. Collaborative efforts between the family and school have the potential for reversing what might otherwise be the inevitable disadvantage of children with EBD (Constable & Walberg, 1998).
Educating Eric Q

The exploration of support in the study was framed within the reviewed literature and organized under the following: (1) Communication of Expectations, (2) Professional Development, (3) Social Work, (4) Motivational Support, and (5) Home-School Partnership

Methodological Approach

Case Study Design
This study employed a single-case design that was of a descriptive exploratory nature aimed at understanding the kinds of support (if any) provided for Eric’s inclusion and determining how the supports were being used. That was done in terms of listening to the subjective voice of the case, Eric Q, as well as key people who were involved in the education of the student-participant, and who Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) described as “information-rich” (p.56) and who would best assist in fulfilling the purpose of the study.

Participants
The researcher needed to select participants from which the most could be learned and needed to explore and understand Eric’s situation. Consequently, purposive sampling was used (Merriam, 2009). Eight participants were involved in the study: Eric Q, one of his parents, his teacher, an assistant teacher assigned to his class, a social worker, two administrators at the school, and a supervisor of a supportive service. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and contingent upon permission from Eric’s mother for his participation in the research during one school term. For the purpose of the study, the researcher divided the participants into three stakeholder groups and the confidentiality of each participant was maintained via a coding system. Table 1 provides a brief description of the three groups and the code assigned to each participant.

Data Collection Methods
Data for the study were collected via three methods: a qualitative questionnaire, interviews, and observation of lessons. Questionnaire data were collected from E3, E4, E5, A6, A7, and A8. That instrument was designed to capture the self-expressed beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of participants pertaining to, for example, the provision of professional development and special education services at the participating school, any role of the social worker in addressing challenges experienced in efforts at educating Eric, any partnership between the school and Eric’s home, expectations communicated
Table 1. Description of the Stakeholder Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Code assigned to participant</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>1. Eric Q</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who used services provided for students having an emotional-behavioural disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Eric’s parent</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>1. Teacher</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who had expertise and experience in working with EBD students or directly providing some training (specialized or otherwise) in working with Eric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Assistant teacher</td>
<td>E4</td>
<td>The social worker had extensive experience in working with EBD students. The teacher and assistant teacher had no training in special education, nor had they engaged in professional development in educating students with EBD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Social Worker</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>1. Supervisor</td>
<td>A6</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who had authority and autonomy to make important decisions pertaining to, for example, the organizational provisions at Eric’s school in response to his individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Vice-Principal</td>
<td>A7</td>
<td>The principal and vice-principal had extensive years of service in the teaching profession but had sparse experience with students officially identified as having EBD. The supervisor had extensive experience in coordinating services to both students and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Principal</td>
<td>A8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
regarding teaching students with EBD and, more specifically, teaching Eric, and motivational supports to improve teaching and learning outcomes (with a focus on motivating Eric).

A semantic differential scale was used with Eric (C1). The researcher considered that he was a struggling reader and administered a questionnaire that was not too wordy. The researcher proposed that would be more appealing to C1. That instrument was designed to capture, for example, how Eric felt in class during reading and other tasks, his experience in receiving extra assistance in class, and in getting a reward or praise. The questionnaires were administered over a three-day period and time spent by the respondents ranged from 30 to 52 minutes.

Individual interviews were conducted with the participants over a four-week period. The data generated via the interviews supplemented the questionnaire data. The researcher used semi-structured interview questions focused primarily on understanding what supports (if any) existed at the school for Eric’s inclusion, and how those supports were used. Each interview lasted fifty-five to sixty minutes on average.

Observation data were collected from 12 lessons for a total of approximately 720 minutes of observed teaching in Eric’s classroom. A protocol that incorporated core elements of the reviewed literature guided the observation process. The protocol consisted of two columns containing questions pertaining to specific behaviours and activities, for example, “What is C1’s role during the activities?” “What is C1 doing during a particular activity?” “Is he on or off task?” “Are antecedents and/or consequences used?”. Observations allowed the researcher to observe “in the natural field setting” and gain “a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94).

Ethical Considerations
To minimize the likelihood that the participants would be identified, specific demographic details were withheld. Bogden and Biklen (1998) described researching the personal feelings, experiences, and perspectives of children and others as an intrusive activity that places an onus on the researcher on guaranteeing and maintaining the personal anonymity of the participants. Thus, the name of the site and the class level were not identified, a pseudonym was used for the student, and codes were used to protect the identities of the participants so that the data collected would “not embarrass or in other ways harm them” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 44). The participants were provided with full information about what the study involved, informed that they had the choice to withdraw from the
study at any time, and each participant’s consent was given freely. Permission for Eric’s participation was also obtained from his parent.

**Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The researcher used member checking as a way to establish credibility and trustworthiness in the study (Creswell, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That process also allowed participants to spot information that could identify them and, consequently, also served as a protection mechanism that could build trust and enhance data quality. Additionally, triangulation was used as a strategy for further enhancing the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011).

**Data Management and Analysis**

At the end of administering each questionnaire, interview, and observation each document was dated and an identification of each participant by the appointed participant code was included. The field notes, artefact contents (from each completed questionnaire), and interviews were transcribed and stored electronically. Significant chunks or segments of each interview, field notes, and questionnaire data were reduced to short phrases (codes) that summarized the basic topic. Then, the researcher moved on to managing the data manually using the cut-and-file technique (Bodgen & Biklen, 1998) to extract and group data chunks with similar codes. Multiple copies of each data set for the purpose of cutting and creating labeled folders according to code names were made. The researcher went through the data and marked each segment to identify its source and page number. Having applied such identification labels, pages of data were cut and placed in appropriate folders to facilitate later data triangulation (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

The categorizing process involved looking for threads or recurring commonalities that tied together or linked bits of data. The initial summaries were grouped into themes (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994), and a list of themes from each interview was developed. When reviewing the first set of observations the same steps were followed. The themes that were generated from the three units of analysis namely, feedback from participants’ responses to questionnaire items, one-to-one interview feedback from each of the eight participants, and field notes from observations of classroom instructional practices were triangulated for the purpose of determining convergent evidence (Yin, 2011). That process facilitated the consolidation of understandings and, ultimately, allowed findings to be confirmed.
The Findings

This section reports the findings based on the two objectives of the paper namely to (1) identify the supports present at the participating school, and (2) describe how the supports were being used. For ease of reading, the reader is reminded of the following codes that represent the participants: Eric (C1), Eric’s mother (C2), Teacher-participant (E3), Assistant teacher (E4), Social worker (E5), Supervisor of a service provided to Eric (A6), Vice-principal (A7), and the Principal (A8).

The Kinds of Support for Meaningful Inclusion present at the School

Communication of expectations regarding the teaching of Eric Q

Although A7 and A8 provided oral communication to E3 and E4 of their expectations regarding the delivery of the general education curriculum to all students, the findings indicated there were no communications from A7 and A8 regarding expectations of teaching methods for engaging Eric in reading, nor for working collaboratively with the social worker (E5) to develop an individual plan to treat with Eric’s holistic needs (see Table 2).

Table 2. Communication of Expectations for Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive written guidelines or policies regarding expectations of teaching methods/strategies for engaging Eric in reading</td>
<td>A7  No</td>
<td>E3  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A8  No</td>
<td>E4  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E5  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive expectations for making sure that a general education curriculum is being taught.</td>
<td>A7  Yes</td>
<td>E3  Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A8  Yes</td>
<td>E4  Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E5  Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive expectations for working collaboratively with others, such as, Eric's social worker, to develop an individual plan to treat with Eric's holistic needs.</td>
<td>A7  No</td>
<td>E3  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A8  No</td>
<td>E4  No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E5  No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the follow-up interview, E4 shared she was expected to give Eric assistance when needed. E3 reported she was expected to deliver the normal curriculum to all her students. When asked what she meant by “normal”, the participant explained “the primary school curriculum and not a special education curriculum”. Findings showed that what was communicated was that the general education curriculum was expected to be delivered to all students, and the teacher-participants’ responsibility was to deliver that content. There was no evidence of a specific plan at the administrative or classroom level for meeting Eric’s specific needs. The social worker (E5) described using an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with Eric as “an ideal to work towards” and as something that “could be quite helpful...if implemented”. In the absence of an IEP for Eric, E5 offered suggestions to A8 and E3 pertaining to how they should manage Eric’s behaviour at school, and while E5 seemed to expect her suggestions would be implemented, there was no coding for data that indicated her suggestions were adopted at any level in the participating school.

Additionally, E3 and E4 articulated that they did not feel confident in their ability to effectively educate Eric. What emerged as important was an issue of a lack of teacher self-efficacy for interacting with Eric in positive ways and effecting positive learning outcomes. For example, during an interview E3 shared:

I must be provided with the necessary tools to help me meet those expectations set for teaching Eric.......While I am expected to teach the contents of the curriculum to all of my students, I don’t feel I have the kinds of skills ... nor the knowledge to deal with Eric’s behaviour and still get him to improve his reading at the same time. (E3/Interview)

**Professional development supports**

The findings showed that professional development supports were provided to the teachers for motivating reluctant readers, differentiating instruction, reading strategies to build comprehension, vocabulary and word recognition skills, and using assessment data to plan for instruction and monitor student progress (see Table 3).

There was no evidence of professional development supports for managing challenging student behaviours. The findings showed that E5 and A6 received professional training in managing the behaviours of EBD students. When asked about the support provided to the school in terms of managing Eric’s behaviour, E5 and A6 reported that the support was provided directly to the student when school visits were made.
Table 3. Professional Development Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional development supports</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on motivating reluctant readers through the use of appropriate resources</td>
<td>E 3 Yes, E 4 Yes, E 5 No</td>
<td>A 6 No, A 7 Yes, A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students</td>
<td>E 3 Yes, E 4 Yes, E 5 No</td>
<td>A 6 No, A 7 Yes, A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on using assessment data to plan for instruction and monitor student progress</td>
<td>E 3 Yes, E 4 Yes, E 5 No</td>
<td>A 6 No, A 7 Yes, A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on reading strategies to build comprehension, vocabulary and word recognition skills</td>
<td>E 3 Yes, E 4 Yes, E 5 No</td>
<td>A 6 No, A 7 Yes, A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on managing the challenging behaviours of students with EBD</td>
<td>E 3 No, E 4 No, E 5 Yes</td>
<td>A 6 Yes, A 7 No, A 8 No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E5 further explained:

_We have so many schools to visit and so many children with serious issues ...... many of them more intense than ---- (Eric) that we function according to priority. On my last visit, I came because of the calls concerning his fighting. I spoke with his teacher to get the details ... but I really don’t tell her how she should manage him in class. (E5/Interview)_
Those statements suggested the presence of particular difficulties such as, numerous schools to visit and the large number of students with special needs, impeded the efficiency of the service offered by E5.

Additionally, factors of negative teacher attitude and feelings of frustration emerged through various statements offered by E3. Those factors were suggested in the statements, “I really don’t feel I am prepared to teach this child (referring to Eric). The things I learn...the strategies and so on, do not help this child (Eric)” (E3/Interview) and again, is suggested in the following:

No amount of professional development could prepare me to teach dis child! Right now, ... Every day is just fighting. I spend more time on dat boy and his nonsense than I do on teaching my students! (E3/Interview)

Motivational supports to the teacher-participants
The questionnaire data provided by A7 and A8 suggested the presence of good motivational supports to E3 and E4. However, E3 and E4 described a different picture (see Table 4).

A7 and A8 reported that they motivated E 3 and E 4 as well as the other teachers on staff by providing additional professional development outside the school, direct feedback to teachers for a job well done, assistance to the teachers in understanding Eric’s (and other students’) issues, help for the teachers to get involved in the planning for what Eric and other students need, and some kind of recognition at staff or PTA meetings. Findings indicated that E3 and E4 believed they had not received any of the motivational supports reported by the two participating administrato rs.

Motivational supports to students
E 3 and E 4 each indicated that they motivated their students by giving rewards and praise for working well and for good behaviour, allowing each student a turn to be a leader of a group, scaffolding students’ efforts at reading and writing tasks, and conferencing with students to help them understand the importance of setting personal goals and providing positive feedback on performance and improvements (see Table 5).
**Educating Eric Q**

**Table 4. Motivational Supports to Teachers by School**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational supports</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive additional professional development outside the school setting.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive direct feedback for a job well done.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive assistance in understanding Eric's (and other students') issues, so as not to take issues personally.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive help for the planning for what Eric and other students need.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive some kind of recognition at staff or PTA meetings.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eric reported in his questionnaire that he did not receive praise nor rewards on any occasion. In exploring this issue further, Eric stated in his interview, “*I doh get any reward. Miss does give de other children in class but not me*” (C1/Interview). When asked about receiving praise at any time, he stated “*Dem doh like me. I doh get any praise!*” When asked if he felt he deserved praise and why, Eric said, “*Yes, even when I get things right ah still doh get any.*” I asked Eric if he had ever volunteered to answer a question posed by any of his teachers and if he had been allowed to be the leader in any group in class. He answered “*Yes*” to the former and “*No*” to the latter question. Out of the twelve transcripts of classroom practice observation data, there was one instance of coding for praise received by a group in which Eric was a member. There was no instance of coding for praise received directly by Eric. The observation data seemed to support Eric’s perceptions of the non-provision of motivational supports to him.
Table 5. Motivational Supports to Students by Teacher-Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Supports</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
<th>Consumer Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive rewards and praise for working well and for good behaviour.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide each student a turn to be a leader of a group/ I have been allowed a turn to be a leader of a group.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive scaffolding of efforts at reading and writing tasks.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive conferencing to bring about understanding of the importance of setting personal goals.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive positive feedback on performance and improvements.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive self-esteem activities to build confidence</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two instances of coding for Eric volunteering to respond, but there were no instances of coding for him being chosen to respond having volunteered. On the first occasion Eric “steupsed” loudly after not being selected by his teacher. The teacher (E3) told him that is not the way to behave in class. Eric responded with another “steups”. On the second occasion (on another visit), after not being selected to respond, Eric placed his head on the desk and did not participate further in the lesson. E3 told him he would have to stand in front of the board at recess time if he did not raise his head off the desk. Eric did not comply. After those two occasions, the observation data did not provide any evidence of further volunteering by the student-participant.
Social work support
Social work was provided by the Students Support Services as a form of direct support to Eric and his family. When asked the primary aim of her interventions with Eric, the social worker (E5) indicated, "It is to teach ... (Eric) how to manage his feeling, particularly his anger, so that he is able to respond more acceptably to conflicts in his life.” When asked about the approach used to accomplish the intervention, E5 reported, “Right now we focus directly on ... (Eric) and his home situation.” When the researcher asked that participant about the extent to which the school was included or supported through their service as stakeholders in Eric’s life, E5 reported:

If you knew how outmatched we are in numbers compared to the large numbers of children in our school system who need our services, you would understand why our service, although we know it is the ideal approach, does not always accommodate a high degree of collaboration with the school. (E5/Interview)

Eric revealed that he liked talking with the social worker. When asked why, he said, “She doesn’t get vex with me. She does listen to me and help me”. When asked to say how the social worker helps him, Eric said, “Ah learning how not to get so angry so fast and to talk to people about how ah feeling instead of hitting”. When asked if he thought he was learning from talking with the social worker, Eric said “Yes”. He added “Ah doh fight as much as ah use to anymore”. Those statements commonly suggested that Eric had a positive perception of the support provided directly to him by the social worker.

Support for building a partnership between the school and Eric’s home
The principal (A8) highlighted the importance of partnering with Eric’s mother. Although that participant reported it was a school policy and a part of their School Development Plan to “build a school culture where all parents feel welcome and can contribute to their children’s education”, there was no evidence to suggest a partnership between Eric’s home and school was present. When asked if Eric’s mother attends PTA meetings or has been invited to serve on a committee, A8 stated, “No, ...we throw out the offer and whether or not they respond is up to them.”

In the follow-up interview of E3, that participant described her relationship with Eric’s mother as “strained!” In exploring the response further, E3 added “She always wants to defend her son’s actions and I have no time to waste in arguing with people who don’t want to take responsibility for their children’s poor behaviour.” When asked about the
school policy for forming a partnership with parents, E3 acknowledged the existence of the policy but stressed, “certain policies look well on paper but are difficult to carry out.”

**How the Supports Were Being Used**

**Communication of expectations**
Findings from questionnaire and interview data showed the communicating of expectations was present at the school as a form of support. For example, in an interview, A7 explained:

*As we try to move forward, we are looking to standardize certain expectations for all teachers. Class time-tables are expected to be put on the wall in each of the classrooms where the teachers will focus on what they plan to do during the block of time they have with the students. This support for the teachers is so that they don’t have to guess what they have to do.* (A7/Interview)

Additionally, findings from questionnaire data indicated a consensus was present among A7, A8, E3, and E4 that expectations for ensuring a general education curriculum was being taught. While a system of communicating expectations was in place, there was no evidence, that system was being used to communicate expectations regarding Eric. For example, A7, A8, E3, and E4 commonly attested that no written guidelines or policies regarding expectations of teaching methods or strategies for engaging Eric in reading were provided. Similarly, no expectations for working collaboratively with E5 to develop an individual plan to treat with Eric’s holistic needs were provided.

**Professional development**
There was evidence of the provision of professional development opportunities at the school, but no evidence of professional development opportunities to build teacher-participants’ and the participating administrators’ competencies for more effectively managing students’ challenging behaviours, and, by extension, more effectively interacting with Eric. The support of professional development opportunities organized by the participating administrators was being used to build teacher competency for more effectively delivering the curriculum. Notably, the participants, A7 and A8 reported that even when professional development was provided, there was meagre transference of what was thought of as more effective practices into classroom practice. That was suggested in, for example, the following statements:
Educating Eric Q

Although we try our best to provide professional development, very often there is not enough effort to implement what was done, and so ... not enough, not many of our students, including (Eric) benefit as much as they could from our teachers engaging in such training. (A8/Interview)

Similarly, A7 reported, “We organize the professional development and they attend session after session, but yet still, they go back to class and continue to teach the same ole way!” Both excerpts suggested an issue of a lack of implementation and carried an inference to resistance to change.

Motivational supports

There was evidence of the presence of motivational supports in Eric’s classroom. Findings from field notes data supported findings from questionnaire and teacher interview data that praise for working well, good behaviour, and providing students a turn to be a leader of a group was being used by the teacher-participants as scaffolds in the classroom. There was no evidence however, that those scaffolds were being used with Eric.

Social work support

A7, A8, E3, and E4 each identified the work of the social worker as a form of support that they had at the school. That support was provided directly to Eric and his mother. Findings suggested that support was being used to equip Eric with skills, to manage in a positive way, the negative emotions he experienced. Eric’s parent (C2) reported that she also communicated with the social worker. She reported, “We talk about how what is happening at home affect Eric.” When asked to further explain, C2 added, “Well, ... the constant fighting and bacchanal does affect his work at school . ... We does fight so much!” The social services support received by C2 emerged as a positive factor. That participant reported the support encouraged her to make changes in her lifestyle concerning her relationships and was helping her learn how to better cope with Eric’s behaviour. She reported she was trying to make personal changes at her home, but admitted that that was very difficult.

Findings suggested that in spite of the availability of the service of a social worker, that service was not being used as efficiently as it could be. E3, in discussing how that service was used reported:

*I think more can be accomplished if we work together. Sometimes she (the social worker) visits and I’m not told a thing. She doesn’t*
know what I am doing and I don’t know what she is doing. Yes, we do talk but not enough, not often either. (E3/Interview)

That excerpt suggested that E3 believed that greater collaboration between herself, as Eric’s teacher, was needed and that collaboration could be beneficial to Eric.

Support for Building a Partnership between the School and Eric’s Home

There was a written school policy that articulated an aim of the school to build closer school-home relationships. That written policy suggested a value was placed on a positive school-home partnership; a relationship that could make a positive contribution to the development of the students at the participating school. In spite of that written policy, there was no coding that evidenced a positive partnership between Eric’s parent and the school, and more specifically, his teachers.

C2, when asked about her involvement in her son’s school life shared, “I don’t feel welcome there at all!” and added, “They does only call me there to complain!” When asked to describe her relationship with her son’s teacher, C2 responded, “She just like the rest a dem! All a dem is the same!” When explored further, the respondent stated, “I avoid going there.” When asked why, she explained, “I does always leave vex.” When asked if she meets with her son’s teacher privately, C2 stated, “No, we talk right in the classroom.” C2 added “She does tell me about my son in front of the whole class and I does answer she back in front of the whole class!” Those statements suggested Eric’s mother held a negative perception of the school and Eric’s teachers.

Discussion of Major Findings and Implications

This section discusses the major findings in terms of the two objectives of the paper and the literature reviewed. Implications of the findings are presented in terms of the issues that emerged out of how the supports were being used.

Communication of Expectations and Professional Development as Support

Lane et al. (2002) stressed that many teachers are uncertain about how best to serve students with EBD in the general education. From the perspectives of the two administrators who participated in this study, their communication to Eric’s teacher and the assistant teacher pertaining to expectations of support to be provided to Eric Q was clear. However, from
Educating Eric Q

the teachers’ perspectives, while the expectations of the administrators were communicated, they believed they did not possess the required repertoire of skills and knowledge needed to match the expectations of the administrators. Importantly, what emerged for the participating teachers was an issue of a lack of sense of self-efficacy for educating Eric in the general-education classroom.

Trout et al. (2003) highlighted the importance of addressing the concerns and supporting the professional needs of teachers who are expected to educate students with EBD within a system of inclusive education. The issue of teacher-participants’ lack of self-efficacy for meeting Eric’s educational needs carries implications for teacher professional development geared toward bridging existing gaps in their knowledge, skills, and ability to successfully implement pedagogical practices for more effectively interacting with Eric. Whether it is the expectation for one’s job responsibilities, improving Eric’s reading outcomes, or managing his challenging behaviours at school, it is important that Eric’s teachers not only have clarity about their role as educators, but the tools for meeting those expectations must be provided.

The teachers working with Eric, not unlike many teachers working with behaviourally challenging students, felt defeated, frustrated, and overwhelmed (Wagner et al., 2005). Inclusive education has often placed an emphasis on physical placements and treating with affective components regarding the EBD student with neglect of other aspects of the educational process (Hegarty, 2001; Stockall & Gartin, 2002; Voltz et al., 2001). While meeting the physical and affective needs of at-risk students is vital, not much emphasis has been placed on meeting the affective and professional needs of local, and perhaps other teachers within the wider Caribbean who play a direct role in inclusive education. That lack of attention may be viewed as a neglected aspect of the educational process and bears implications not only for ongoing teacher professional development, but what is offered to all teachers as part of teacher training programmes.

Motivation as Support
In this study, the school administrators indicated that they were making an effort to motivate Eric’s teachers. Those teachers, in turn, indicated they were making an effort to provide motivational support to Eric. Teachers working with EBD students need ongoing motivational supports that transcend the typical supports for teachers of students without EBD (Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Having to treat with challenging behaviours that are complex, and confusing can daunt a
teacher’s ability to effectively educate students with EBD. The participating administrators did not seem to have a clear understanding of what it takes to motivate the teachers who directly interacted with Eric nor the importance of not just providing that support but ensuring that it was ongoing and consistent.

Fulfilling their motivational role for any of their students, places an onus on developing competencies in pro-active decision-making skills (Alderman, 2004). Motivation is situational and contextual, and teachers of students with or without EBD who understand the importance of actively planning how to motivate their students, and not giving reactionary responses to problems as they occur, commonly realize rewarding results. The teacher-participants provided students with a mixture of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. However, much more effort is needed in not only providing this support to Eric Q, but in maintaining the effort. Managing Eric’s behaviour and effecting higher learning outcomes is a challenge that carries an implication for the direct provision of motivational supports to that student, and, by extension, other at-risk students who have found a place in the general education classroom.

**Social work as Support**

McKinnon et al. (2001) contend that the child and the structure of his relationships outside school has a marked influence on his performance in the classroom, hence the need for coordinated and comprehensive services to the child and his family through social work services. Hare (1988) and McKinnon et al. advise a broad-based team approach that embraces the chief stakeholders, children, along with general classroom teachers, special educators, administrators, parents, support services staff, as necessary for successful implementation of best practices for students with EBD. Eric Q and certain members of his family received services of a social worker. However, the data in this study could not support any claim of a presence of the kind of broad-based approach advised by McKinnon and colleagues.

That broad-based approach is the kind of socio-eco logical approach that allows the social worker greater capacity in working toward the development of the child’s personal control over his own life through improving the quality of interactions between the child, and his or her particular social environment (Frey & Nichols, 2003). The social work support seemed to rest primarily on Eric and his home. The common perspective of the teacher-participants that any social work intervention aimed at helping Eric develop control over his own life should more
effectively embrace them is significant because they play an important role in Eric’s social context. Perhaps if the difficulties expressed by the social worker are overcome, then the kinds of broad-based approach advised by Frey and Nichols can be more readily facilitated.

**Partnership Between the School and Eric’s Home as Support**

Parents of children with EBD who are being educated in a system of inclusion commonly report they do not feel their role as a collaborative partner is encouraged by the school (Constable & Walberg, 1988; Krueger, 1994. Building positive relationships, whether between the teacher and parent, or the student and parent, is a crucial step to establishing a strong home-school partnership. In spite of the presence of a school policy that articulated a value placed on fostering a higher quality of partnership with parents, it was clear that Eric’s mother did not buy into the notion that she was welcomed or valued by the school. What was articulated by that parent was more aligned to a perception of disenfranchisement from the school than a sense of belonging. Such negative parent perception of the school carries an implication for more effective communication which is central to beginning and nurturing the process of cultivating a positive home-school connection. Perhaps Eric’s parent and teachers can decide at the start of every school year how they will facilitate clear and informative two-way communication. The existing structures at the participating school and other schools, such as the PTA and school committees where parents are members, can provide a foundation for reducing deterrents to involving Eric’s mother and other parents, and nurturing a more amicable partnership. Successful inclusion, for Eric and others may require positive changes or shifts in the attitudes and beliefs of school administrators, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders; changes that reflect they truly believe that students with EBD and other disabilities can successfully be educated in the general education classroom.

**Conclusion**

There is a tremendous amount of work and effort that needs to occur for the meaningful inclusion of Eric at the school and this should be a broad-based effort by all stakeholders in Eric’s ecological system. Taken separately, supports such as professional development, social work services, motivation, and a positive home-school collaborative effort can have a positive impact on the quality of education that Eric Q and other EBD students receive. However, when those supports are adopted as part of a cohesive and comprehensive approach within a system of inclusive
education, it is possible that attaining more favourable education outcomes can more effectively be accomplished. As Trinidad and Tobago strives to make inclusive education a part of the local education landscape, providing the necessary supports and developing policies that articulate how those supports are expected to be used are a sine qua non for successful inclusive education.

References


Educating Eric Q


THE COMPETENCIES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO ENGAGE IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

Leela Ramsook and Marlene Thomas

Hundreds of teachers have graduated with a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree from the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) since 2010 and are currently employed at primary schools across Trinidad and Tobago. The purpose of the study was to determine whether Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) believed that they acquired the competencies to engage in inclusive practices. It also sought to investigate how NQTs implement inclusive practices, and to unearth their experiences. A mixed method approach was adopted using purposive sampling with one hundred and twenty NQTs. Data collection procedures included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with focus groups and reflective writing. Data were analysed using an integration of quantitative and qualitative procedures. The results indicate that NQTs believe that they have developed the competencies to engage in inclusive practices, and they implement inclusive practices by using a variety of teaching/learning strategies. The experiences of NQTs are encapsulated in four major themes. However, participants complained that they face major challenges. It can be concluded that there should be support, resources and a digitized forum for teachers to share best practices. This research has implications for the review of the B. Ed. programme at UTT, other higher education institutions, and for the teacher education in general.

Introduction

Background of the Study

In July 2006, there was a major pedagogical shift in teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago. The last cohort of teacher trainees graduated from the two existing teachers’ colleges (Valsayn and Corinth) which were
subsequently closed and the Ministry of Education (MOE) relinquished its governance on teacher education. Teacher education made its transition to a tertiary institution, a newly established local university, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), which offers a four-year degree programme in its Centre for Education Programme (CEP). This initiative was part of a major thrust of education reform as articulated in the *Education Policy Paper 1993-2003* (MOE, 1992) and emphasized in the *Strategic Plan, 2002-2006* (MOE, 2002).

Recently, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has reiterated its commitment to meet the needs of diverse learners. In reporting on the action to be taken to address the performance of the nation’s children in the school system, the Government has stipulated that there is a need “to transform our teaching and learning strategies to address the diverse backgrounds, aptitudes and learning styles to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to succeed” (MOE 2012, p. v). According to this education plan, the recommendation by the Ministry of Education is to adopt a student-centred approach towards the development of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

The focus of the MOE therefore, is to maintain, mainstream, inclusive classrooms to promote equality and equity under the same umbrella. Hundreds of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who have graduated from the University are currently employed and entrusted with this task at primary schools across the country. An examination of the competencies of NQTs to engage in inclusive practices in the delivery of quality education for every student is therefore a justified study.

**Significance of the Study**

Meeting the needs of diverse learners at primary level requires a wide range of teacher competencies to be developed in teachers through pre-service education. Failure to do so would be detrimental to the school and to society, thus, it is necessary to find out from those who interface with the schools to determine the gaps to be closed and the needs to be met. The pre-service teachers who have experienced and graduated from the programme at UTT, have made their transition into the primary schools as NQTs. They are strategically placed as key stakeholders to meet the needs of all learners, in particular those learners who are deemed ‘at risk’ because they have special needs. The *Education Policy Paper 1993-2003* espouses, “Mainstreaming of children with special needs except for severe cases will be the norm” (MOE, 1992, p. 12), while the MOE outlines, “Inclusive: We expect all students will learn in a welcoming environment,
regardless of place, culture or learning needs” (MOE, 2012, p. xi), as a guiding principle for educators.

The Strategic Plan, 2002-2006 outlines the MOE’s vision to be “. . . a pacesetter in the holistic development of an individual through an education system which enables meaningful contributions within the global context” (MOE, 2002, p. 31). Underpinning this vision is the philosophical tenet that “Every child has an inherent right to an education which the development of maximum capability will enhance regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social or religious background” (MOE, 2002, p. 31). Guided by the vision projected by this plan, the need arises to investigate the how NQTs implement inclusive practices.

Theoretical Framework
This study is informed by various theories including, andragogy as proffered by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) and constructivism as participants construct their own meaning, interpretations and experiences. Also, Vygotsky’s (1978) social development theory, Gardner’s (1995) theory of multiple intelligences and Carol Ann Tomlinson’s (2005) theory on differentiated instruction underpin the research as they inform teaching and learning.

Literature Review

Inclusivity
Amidst a multiplicity of definitions and conceptualizations advanced for inclusive education, the one outlined by Thousand and Villa, (2000) as “welcoming, valuing and supporting the diverse learning needs of all students in shared general education environments” (p. 73), was considered in this study but the broader developing concept of inclusivity was also addressed. An analysis of the discourse on inclusive education reveals that the concept of inclusion transcends the original idea of including children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Mainstreaming refers to the inclusion of special students in the general education process … gifted and talented individuals, students from culturally and diverse backgrounds, and students at risk for school failure (Lewis & Doorlag, 2011). In their extensive research on special education O’Gorman and Drudy (2011) skilfully traced the changing concept of special education from a medical model to a social model. This revised model recognizes diversity and uniqueness in individuals and also establishes that the school has the responsibility to address and accommodate these needs.
The philosophy behind inclusivity is that all students should be educated and given equal opportunities as their peers in mainstream classrooms. Teachers acknowledge, appreciate, and respect students' varied talents, skills, abilities, interests, backgrounds, and intelligences (Navarro, Zervas, Gesa & Sampson, 2016). But, Cain (2012) lamented “the lasting impact that childhood experiences both in school and in the home could have on an individual’s beliefs about teaching, learning and schooling in general” (p.103).

Many of today's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, which holds true for primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. As such, the role of the teacher becomes more significant. It is therefore incumbent on teachers to enhance and broaden their working knowledge of special needs and to develop skills and competencies to address the special needs of children in schools. This shift in thinking in meeting the needs of special children in the mainstream classroom will also require a rethinking of the teacher’s role, as well as their preparation for teaching.

In the B. Ed. programme offered at the UTT, the training that NQTs received was designed to empower them with the skills and competencies to practice inclusive education. However, it is realistic to expect that the NQTs may encounter challenges in the implementation of inclusive practices (Lavia, 2008) in their respective classrooms. Hodkinson (2005), of the University of Chester, in his exploration of the understanding and knowledge base of NQTs, suggested that many of the barriers to implementation resided within the schools themselves. Clough and Garner (as cited in Hodkinson, 2005) reported that inclusivity became problematic in educational institutions because of a lack of thorough understanding of implementation practices for inclusive education, whilst Corbett (2001) reported a lack of proper training as a major problem. According to Hodkinson (2005), a significant concern is that NQTs do not apply the same understanding of inclusive education.

However, McMillan (2008), in her studies on inclusive education, reported on the success of inclusive practices. A significant finding was that inclusive practices yielded academic as well as social benefits. But she found that such inclusive practices are more likely to be successful when there was cooperation among colleagues.

**UTT Training – B.Ed. programme**

UTT offers a comprehensive programme with a number of pedagogical courses to provide students with the skills to implement a variety of approaches to make education available to all learners in the primary school. UTT has attempted to equip students with the skills to make
inclusivity a reality in tandem with the 1994 Salamanca Statement and international support for full inclusion (UNESCO, 2009). When classrooms are transformed into an inclusive system, students are better poised to develop cognitively, socially and emotionally. Implementing a variety of student-centred approaches is one of the key components to making this process of development a reality.

The courses UTT presents incorporate in-house sessions with simulated activities that allow students to be involved in hands-on and vicarious experiences. These are converted into real-life classroom situations during the practicum which form a critical component of training every semester. When students engage in field practice in schools they are also mentored by UTT instructors as well as cooperating teachers and administrators to embrace inclusivity. NQTs therefore learn to integrate pedagogical content knowledge, that is, “subject matter for teaching . . . content most germane to its teachability” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9) and procedural knowledge (or how to teach) to enhance their skills and competencies for inclusive classrooms. The expectations are, therefore, that NQTs are empowered to embrace the challenges of an inclusive classroom.

**Multi-Modal Instruction**

In inclusive classrooms teachers implement a variety of instructional strategies to cater for diverse learners. For example, with tiered instruction they maximize learning opportunities for the slow, remedial, average and gifted students. They use multiple modalities to cater for different learning styles including, visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic (Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004; Tomlinson, 2001). With the use of multiple modalities students process information better (Wood, 2006), and are more creative in problem solving as there is appeal to different senses (Swanson, Solis, Ciullo & McKenna, 2012). There is the enhancement of different skills, experiences and motivation through oral presentations, cooperative learning and the use of technology. McKenna, Shin and Ciullo (2015) note,

> Within a structured class, teachers systematically delivered mathematics lessons using specific procedures—introducing objectives, reviewing previously learned concepts, modelling new skills, and providing guided and independent practice. Through this method . . . teachers applied procedure-based mathematics instruction to support students with LD [learning difficulties]. (p. 8)

**A Community of Support**
Inclusion is also about engendering a sense of community, belonging and encouragement from administrators, family, and professionals. The family as a collaborative partner (Salend, 2011; Skrtic, 1991; Wood, 2006) also enables a palatable learning environment (Choate, 2004). According to Wood (2006) “Collaboration requires effective communication” (p. 30) among all stakeholders, especially parents. “Among the most sweeping changes taking place in our schools is the redefinition of teacher roles and responsibilities” (Choate, 2004, p. 15) and some teachers are willing to “adopt an individualized working style, focused on the child's needs” (Blândul & Bradea, 2017, p. 337). Also, educators collaborate to minimize curricular barriers and proactively solve emerging problems (Heacox, 2002; Thwala, 2015). But collegial support, sharing ideas and resources, are also essential for successful implementation of inclusive practices.

**Inclusive Practice – The dilemma**

Teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusive practices may impact negatively on inclusivity. While many educators have bought into the philosophy of inclusion, some advocate individualized programmes for challenged students. In a study conducted in Swaziland, Thwala (2015) found that teacher stress and their inability to deal with new responsibilities impacted negatively on inclusive practices. In addition, a study on the impact of inclusion on teachers by Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro and Peck (1995) revealed mixed results.

Also, students’ behaviours such as truancy and indiscipline may constrain teachers’ motivation for inclusivity. In a study done in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, Bergsma (2000) found that for inclusive education, the powers that be have fewer ideas with respect to policy development and implementation when it comes to the school system and the micro level . . . principals, teachers, pupils, and parents and guardians get lost, and the “at-risk” children start to lose their battle with the mainstream (p. 29). Sands, Kozleski and French (2000) note that educational changes are unrelenting and overwhelming and, often, at cross purposes, while Skrtic (1991) argues that the inclusion debate will be amplified in the twenty-first century.

**Purpose of the Study**

The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether NQTs from the University of Trinidad and Tobago believed that they acquired the knowledge, skills and competencies to engage in inclusive practices to ensure that every student learns. In addition, the research focused on how
The Competencies of Newly Qualified Teachers From the University of Trinidad and Tobago

The NQTs are implementing inclusive practices to meet the needs of diverse learners at the primary level and it also sought to determine the experiences of NQTs in the implementation of inclusive practices in their classes.

Research Questions

1. Do NQTs from the UTT believe that they are equipped with the necessary competencies to engage in inclusive practices at the primary level?
2. How do NQTs from the UTT implement inclusive practices in their classes?
3. What are the experiences of NQTs in implementing inclusive practices?

Sample

The sample involved 24 schools, two of which were from Tobago, with a total of 120 NQTs from the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The participants successfully completed a four-year Bachelor of Education programme at the institution. The NQTs are currently employed as teachers by the MOE in primary schools where they teach at different levels. They serve in government, denominational and private primary/elementary schools located in several educational districts in Trinidad and Tobago.

The major commonality, however, is that all participants graduated from UTT. They were exposed to a synthesis of the same pedagogical content knowledge, instructional methods and assessment procedures. An established standard was upheld by UTT by conforming to all standards, all validation requirements and also by being fully accredited, on par with other universities in the region.

Data Collection Methods

In this study, a mixed method approach was utilized to investigate the beliefs of NQTs about their competencies, the implementation strategies they use and their classroom experiences with inclusive practices at primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. A mixed analysis involves using quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques within the same study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011).

A questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions was used. This was administered to 120 NQTs, UTT graduates, who are currently
teaching at primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The instrument was piloted to determine the suitability of the questions, some of which had to be modified based on feedback.

Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 focus groups. Each group was asked the same questions to maintain consistency of the data analysis. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim to establish credibility and accuracy of the data. The transcripts were returned to participants for checking, which allowed for authenticity of data.

Participants were also asked to engage in ongoing reflective writings which included some of their experiences and how they implement inclusive practices in their respective classes. The different data gathering methods using questionnaires, semi-structured focus group interviews and written reflections, allowed for validation and triangulation of data. Participants were advised about voluntary participation, confidentiality of data and anonymity from inception. Interviewees were also reminded that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from study at any time.

Data Analysis

In this study quantifiable data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide a synthesis of the information. The findings were corroborated with the data derived from the qualitative analysis to establish congruency and “increase understanding of the underlying phenomenon” (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011, p.1). The qualitative data analysis procedure outlined by Creswell (2012) was adapted and utilized for “complementarity i.e., results from one analysis type [e.g., qualitative] are interpreted to enhance, expand, illustrate, or clarify findings derived from the other strand [quantitative]” (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, p. 4).

The data were read reiteratively (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) and compared to establish patterns as well as determine outliers. Data analysed from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with focus groups and reflective writings formed a crystallization of codes, categories and themes.

Results

The data revealed that 81% of the respondents believe that they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to engage in inclusive practices at the primary level. Fifteen percent found that they
were prepared for the “ideal” classroom while another 4% disclosed that they were not well prepared. The latter cited personal concerns such as lack of effective communication skills and problems with classroom management which they believed curtailed their proficiency. A summary of the data is outlined in Table 1.

### Table 1. Beliefs About Competencies for Inclusive Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipped with Competencies</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for ‘Ideal’ Classroom</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Well Prepared</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on the implementation of inclusive practices demonstrate that the NQTs implement inclusive practices on a regular/daily basis by using various teaching methodologies. A total of 108 participants reported that they use cooperative learning regularly while 97 outlined that they differentiated instruction in terms of content, process and product. Eighty-four participants used tiered learning for instruction, aligning the complexity of the content to the learning readiness and previous knowledge of the students. Seventy-six NQTs also identified inquiry-based learning and 75 outlined peer tutoring as strategies they used to cater for diverse needs of students. Table 2 gives a summary of the data.

### Table 2. Some Inclusive Strategies Implemented by NQTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Total No. of NQTs (120)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated learning</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered learning</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry-based learning</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NQTs used the following methods on a more limited basis: theme-based learning, scenario-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, games and simulations as well as activities involving the use of technology.

As shown in Table 3, 27% cited the lack of administrative support as the reason for limited implementation while 47% complained about the lack of resources. Nine percent bemoaned a lack of collegial support; 12% lamented that the culture of the school was a mitigating factor, while 5% felt that they lacked confidence to implement inclusive practices.
Table 3. Reasons for Non-implementation of Inclusive Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Implementation Reasons</th>
<th>Percentages (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Administrative support</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collegial support</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of the school</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes that emanated about experiences of NQTs from the qualitative data, that is, eleven focus group interviews and reflective writings, include: (1) Proficiency, (2) Gratitude for Practicum and Practice, (3) Student Centred Strategies, and (4) Refining Techniques despite Challenges. The anecdotal statements below were selected based on the collective agreement of members of the focus groups. Eleven groups were included because of varied demographics.

Focus Group 1.

_UTT has equipped me with the professional skills. I enjoy the challenge . . . I need to go out there and be the best teacher in a diverse class . . . differentiating instruction, bringing our real-life examples, for example when I am teaching ratios, I tell the children about cooking, cooking involves ratio . . . UTT gave us the privilege to go out in the schools and practise and I practise what was taught to us, so I have the skills._

Focus Group 2.

_Field teaching is tedious . . . difficult but the experience gave me practice . . . the experience in the teaching field benefitted me the most . . . I could handle any class . . . my cooperating teachers said they like my confidence . . . there are problems . . . but I feel ready._

Focus Group 3

_I think I am competent enough to go into the classroom and teach all the topics . . . I teach each of them (students) in the way they understand and help them to understand and I assist in any way I can . . . I do research . . . I have to do oral assessment sometimes._

Focus Group 4
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UTT made us spend a lot of time on lesson planning . . . that was real tough . . . I learn to plan, and with the practical teaching I developed the skills . . . I am catering for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Focus Group 5
My experience was confusing at first . . . but practicum after practicum, year after year made me into a teacher, a very skilled teacher. I use cooperative learning, games and other methods.

Focus Group 6
Challenging . . . but if you give the proper attention to the students, they learn and respect you . . . if you are always behind that child and you keep supporting that child he will learn . . . you have to show the students different ways to solve problems . . . I learnt different ways in UTT and I put them into practice.

Focus Group 7
Yes and no, it really prepares you for the ideal classroom but I use a lot of manipulatives and strategies . . . previous knowledge is very important because you cannot go to a classroom and start teaching if the children don’t have the previous knowledge . . . the fact of the matter is that it is ‘trying’ but I get every child to learn even if it is one sentence or to solve one problem.

Focus Group 8
The class is crowded, and it is really hard to find activities but I try to make learning meaningful for each child in my class . . . I used the technology . . . it was fun because they like the games . . . but I had to facilitate with my laptop . . . but I have to work on my communication skills.

Focus Group 9
I break down the content and focus on student understanding . . . practicum was difficult, but I am a better teacher. UTT has done all it can to equip me to be able to effectively manage diverse learners in classrooms.

Focus Group 10
It is still an issue in my mind, but I am learning to deal with it more and more by practising every day . . . I used cooperative
learning so every child was involved . . . but it was difficult, we barely had space to walk through the class.

Focus Group 11

I have developed the competency . . . but classroom management . . . I implement different methods like grouping the children . . . but I tell you classroom management . . . I feel a little embarrassed . . . I tell you my classroom management is really a huge problem.

Reflective Writing A

There are at least three children with serious learning disabilities. However, I have made a plan for assisting them with their learning problems. I have discussed the plan with the principal . . . I believe that I do possess the necessary skills to deal with the problems.

Reflective Writing B

I do make an effort to enhance my teaching methods on a daily basis. I think my students are now more interested in their work. I do have students with reading problems . . . I have grouped the children in such a way that peer learning is possible . . . I realize that I have the skills. I just need to plan and make a conscious effort to implement more student-centered approaches.

Reflective Writing C

I use student centred approaches and I do make and use resources, especially manipulatives in the teaching of Mathematics. I will admit that it is difficult to be creative all day long and there are times that I drift into the traditional methods. . . . but I will admit that the students are more interested when I employ a variety of teaching strategies. I think that I do have knowledge of the skills to be employed in meeting the needs of the diverse learners in my classroom and I do implement them regularly.

Discussion

The results revealed that NQTs believe that they possess skills and competencies to deal with the diverse needs of learners at the primary level. The majority of teachers indicated that they have developed the confidence based on practical experiences in the classroom during practicum throughout their tenure at UTT. While they have given full
credit to UTT some have mentioned the input of cooperating teachers and the role they played as mentors.

Participants believe that their experiences have been fulfilling and satisfying when they engaged in inclusive practices. NQTs provide a supportive, student friendly environment and use a variety of activities to enhance students’ learning. However, they experience challenges and difficulties which are discouraging, even leading to frustration, confusion, anxiety. They bewail that there are classrooms that are not conducive to learning as well as an acute lack of resources and collegial support in the schools. “It is not uncommon for teaching staff to complain that they do not have appropriate time and resources available to them to effectively carry about such collaboration” (Rix, 2005, p. 134).

NQTs believe that devising creative ways of engaging in inclusive practices becomes tedious and time consuming especially because they are faced with a content loaded curricula. The structure of national assessments together with teacher responsibility to enhance students’ ability to pass examinations impact on the frequency and quality of inclusive practices particularly at the upper levels. In addition, pressures from parents, administrators and school-supervisors, who have a traditionalist philosophy, may be demotivating for NQTs.

The NQTs disclosed that in addition to traditional methods such as discussion, they used constructivist student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. By implementing cooperative learning, for example, NQTs were able to engage students in structured activities, where there was teamwork incorporating positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction (Kagan, 1994).

Tiered learning provided appropriate opportunities for the remedial learners and sufficient challenge for gifted, advanced learners (Vygotsky, 1978). Peer tutoring also allowed students to work collaboratively, give and receive feedback, accept responsibility and evaluate their own learning. The main focus of inquiry-based learning was to provide opportunities for questioning, problem solving and creative thinking. The strategies NQTs employed demand astute planning and organization for effective implementation. Therefore, NQTs demonstrated a passion for teaching as well as commitment and dedication to ensure that no child is left behind. NQTs indicated that they incorporated varied activities using technology with videos, games and simulations. However, they found it time consuming and difficult to deal with the associated technological problems. By the use of varied interactive, student-centred methods and activities, in different subject areas, NQTs practised inclusivity as well as
catered for the different learning styles and the holistic development of the students.

The participants attributed their confidence and proficiency in the execution of the strategies and activities to the hands-on, experiential practice they received as part of their training at the UTT. They expressed gratitude for the practice during their practicum mandated by UTT. However, they acknowledged that they are still refining their pedagogical skills and are willing to continue to “perfect” them. NQTs are also aware that continuous self-learning is an essential benchmark for continuity towards successful inclusivity. Holdsworth (2005) notes, “It is the experimentation and the ability to reflect about the needs of children, about their varied strengths and weaknesses, about the choices in methodology, and how to maximize the potential of all children that make for inclusive styles” (p. 131).

While no one outlined the term differentiated instruction, some participants mentioned that they simplified content into sub-components (whereby they differentiated content), utilized multiple teaching strategies such as cooperative learning (process differentiation), and used different modes of assessment such as oral presentations (product differentiation) (Joseph, Thomas, Simonette, & Ramsook, 2013). NQTs adopted differentiated instruction by continuously adjusting instruction so that the needs of all students were met. When there is differentiated learning, all students make accelerated progress (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005).

The terminology tiered learning did not arise but some respondents revealed that they devised activities so that students may work at different levels of complexity to accomplish the same task. Efforts were made to scaffold students to their next level of learning. By adopting interactive approaches NQTs ensured that all students, including the average, slow and remedial, learnt fundamental concepts and skills. The gifted learner was also taken into account with the provision of enrichment exercises and opportunities for independent learning. This suggests that students’ developmental stages and maturational levels were also taken into account.

NQTs recognized the importance of previous knowledge and the concepts of going from the known to the unknown, simple to complex, concrete to abstract and the use of symbolic, enactive and iconic representations. Lewis and Doorlag (1995) advise teachers to “Break the learning tasks into teachable sub-components” (p. 98). They used realia, manipulatives and real-life examples so that concepts were explicit, meaningful and culturally relevant.
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However, NQTs indicated that the inclusive classroom is very challenging and sometimes the daily school routine is so overwhelming that in order to survive they are forced to revert to traditional methods of rote learning or catering for the average learner. They recognize that there are no quick fixes; that they are plagued with multiple problems such as lack of resources and sometimes the systemic problems repress their targeted goals and objectives to engage in inclusive practices. Skrtic (1991) argues that teachers are constrained by the machine bureaucracies of the school.

Some NQTs lamented that they felt discouraged as the culture of the schools mitigated against their inclusive practices. While some were deterred, others made proactive interventions which encouraged at least one principal to buy into the practice. NQTs outlined that a collaborative approach among staff members is minimal if not obstructionist. Other NQTs have attributed their limitations to personal factors such as self-esteem, confidence, and inability to manage classes properly and to communicate effectively. Only one NQT enunciated that a collaborative effort was forged among the staff, heads of departments and the principal in a particular school for the promotion of inclusivity.

In summary, researchers such as Tomlinson (2005), and McKenna, Shin and Ciullo (2015) observe that teacher-belief in inclusivity is an investment in education. NQTs reported that inclusion is amenable in that they believe in their competence and that UTT has equipped them to engage in, adapt and implement inclusive practices. They also reiterated that their experiences convey that inclusivity is beneficial to all students. In spite of these indicators, they claim that they are plagued with many challenges which can serve as deterrents to best practice.

Conclusion

All stakeholders benefit from inclusive education. When NQTs practise inclusion, they feel a sense of accomplishment. Students are motivated and learning becomes fun. The NQTs from UTT demonstrate high levels of efficacy and proficiency in catering for the needs of every child but they acknowledge that they are still developing their skills. While there are mitigating factors such as the culture of the schools, students’ indiscipline and lack of support from other educators, greater collaboration must be forged between the University, teachers, the MOE and other stakeholders. Perhaps the inclusion of a course in counselling offered by UTT as well as other higher educational institutions, or piloted by the MOE will enhance the skills of NQTs in engaging in inclusive practices. Also, professional support for NQTs should be provided for teachers and an evaluation unit.
with capacity for referral should be established by the MOE to determine the severity of students’ problems. The unit should be well integrated for monitoring purposes. Additionally, a digitized/virtual forum for teachers whereby successful practices and solutions of new and emerging problems can be shared and will add a new dimension to enable teachers and create an environment for inclusion in today’s globally challenging, competitive society.

**Recommendations**

This investigation into how NQTs cater for inclusivity may generate interest for future studies into inclusive practices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It may spark interest into the functionality of the Student Support Services of the MOE as an integral part of the education system. Many administrators need to be sensitized to improved practices and into the philosophy of inclusion. Such a movement should also contribute to the re-engineering of the culture of schools where inclusive practices are not encouraged. Such a move may contribute considerably to the aspiration of the Government to transform the education system to ensure that all students are given equal opportunities to succeed.

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INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING AT THE TERTIARY LEVEL: Approaches to Enhanced Accessibility for Learners With Special Educational Needs

Elna Carrington-Blaides, Karen Sanderson Cole, and Nadia Laptiste-Francis

Foundation courses are a compulsory part of the curriculum at The University of the West Indies; servicing a range of faculties including the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences. This means that within the courses lie a mix of learners, learning styles and abilities. Despite this reality, teaching methods employed favour an approach in which the learner does not present with special needs. FOUN 1001 English for Academic Purposes is one example of these foundation courses done by a cross section of students across the Humanities and the Social Sciences, offered every semester both locally and regionally. The main objectives of this paper are to examine modes that have traditionally underpinned the teaching of foundation courses and move from there to consider pedagogical issues raised by Universal Design for Learning and Differentiated Instruction as two specific approaches that pinpoint areas in which avenues for creating a more inclusive learning environment within language teaching at the tertiary level can be conceived. Secondly, we suggest various modes of presentation which are useful for students with various types of exceptionalities. The following questions will guide the discussions. At the tertiary level, how have foundation courses been presented traditionally? What are the recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses so as to cater for exceptional individuals in the classroom? How can an evaluation of both approaches improve practice in tertiary level classrooms? Finally, discussions, recommendations and conclusions will be presented. One key recommendation points to targeted, specific teacher professional development underpinned by the use of readily available technology to enhance pedagogy.

“One telling measure of how differently teaching is regarded from traditional scholarship or research . . . is what a difference it makes to have a "problem" in one versus the other” (Bass, 1999, p. 1). Bass argues that having a problem in scholarship and research is at the heart of academic engagement whereas a problem in teaching is not to be embraced, a “fix”
is needed and must be sought after. Changing the discourse as Bass suggests, from remediation to scholarship requires a response to the following: “How might we make the problematization of teaching a matter of regular communal discourse? How might we think of teaching practice, and the evidence of student learning, as problems to be investigated, analysed, represented, and debated?” (Bass, 1999, p. 1). Shulman (1998) in his discourse on course anatomy first posited that any activity that is branded scholarship should display three critical characteristics: “it should be public, susceptible to critical review and evaluation, and accessible for exchange and use by other members of one’s scholarly community” (para. 2). Teaching in the traditional sense is usually very private and conjures up images of the ‘sage on the stage’. Any comments and or questions by peers are often viewed with great suspicion and insular thoughts quickly emerge. Teaching as scholarship is then more desirable and should underpin all teaching at the tertiary level. Shulman argues that teaching as scholarship is a process which embodies five key elements: vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis.

**Background**

**Course Anatomy**

Shulman (1998) contends that courses are like organisms; each course has various parts and structures which have their own functions, but each part must work in tandem with other parts to achieve the course objectives and goals. FOUN 1001: English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is a semester long course offered at The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Trinidad (The UWI). It is one of seven foundation courses available to first year students. Foundation courses on the whole attempt to provide entering students with basic skills important to writing and research at the tertiary level. EAP specifically targets the building of expository writing skills in terms of the basic organization and structure of an academic essay in relation to specific expository strategies such as analysis by division and classification for example, and research and documentation skills. The delivery of the course includes both face to face and online measures, a blended approach. It has quite a large range servicing students of the Faculties of Humanities and Education and Social Sciences as well as other teaching and learning institutions throughout the Caribbean. The course in its present form makes basic assumptions about the target population. These include that in addition to possessing the entry level requirements which include a grade 1 in CXC English Language for example, it assumes that the typical student also possesses all the required
resources and abilities to function appropriately in a blended environment of face to face and online modes. In its present form delivery modes make little accommodation for students who may be hearing or visually impaired or suffer from common learning disabilities such as dyslexia. The University’s current policy requires that students who fall into this category, self-identify and make contact with the University’s Student Life and Development Department (SLDD) which can advocate on a student’s behalf. Services typically offered are limited and include requests for extra time on examinations, special venues, seating accommodation and counselling. None of these interventions address the issue of the design of course material. The reality though is that access to tertiary education through government initiatives such as Government Assistance for Tertiary Expenses (GATE) means that the level of diversity in the student population is gradually increasing and will have an impact on foundation or entry level courses which are compulsory for students. This means that there is need for the university as a whole to address the challenge of providing for a changing student population. There is therefore a growing imperative to consider the design of courses to ensure suitability for a range of students with diverse needs.

Course in Present Format

EAP as a course is notable for the ways in which it has been adjusted over time to reflect the needs of its students. University level writing courses first made their debut in the 1960s at The UWI. It was believed that students registered with the required competencies. The shortcomings in this assumption gradually saw a refining of focus with more emphasis being placed on grammar and specialization in specific expository modes (Milson-Whyte, 2008). In the 1990s there was a shift again from individual coursework formal essay examination as well as a final examination to a more developmental and collaborative process practiced today, where students work together to create outlines and then through a process of continuous feedback produce the complete essay moving through the stages of outline to body paragraph to complete essay. Students are supported along the way not only by tutors in small classes of no more than 20, but also through the provision of writing and grammar workshops which target specific problem areas in language. Students also have the benefit of accessing the University’s writing centre where writing coaches offer individual attention to participants. The Foundation Unit which has responsibility for delivering EAP and all its sister courses also offers a practice writing service where students can submit samples of their writing for evaluation and consultation.
The delivery of course content is facilitated through weekly two-hour plenary or lecture sessions and one-hour tutorial sessions. Students are required to attend one plenary session and one tutorial session each week. The course also contains an online component - myeLearning where students can complete self-paced independent exercises as well as view summarized PowerPoint presentations of lectures. The plenary sessions however are where the main content is delivered and the principles of the specific expository method are introduced. Lecture sessions are delivered in large halls typically with a seating capacity for 200–400 students. There is a fixed raised podium at the front which accommodates the screen on which multimedia projections will be shown, as well as the presenter’s podium and computer/laptop. Typically, a PowerPoint presentation is shown. Students can take notes and ask questions during the presentations. Seating is fixed in an amphitheatre type arrangement. If a student has a physical disability requiring wheelchair assistance there are ramps. These students are usually placed just under the podium to the front. If a student has a particular learning disability the situation becomes a little more complicated. Sight-impaired students for example must have their own specialized equipment that will allow them to “view” material presented as well as retrieve material from the online environment. No department protocols have been established for dealing with visual or hearing-impaired students within the tutorial setting. How these students fare depends on the level of sensitivity of the specific tutor as well as the student’s own willingness to be proactive to contact the SLDD to advocate on his/her behalf. Though as noted before, this advocacy does not include modifications of course content from the particular course perspective. Accommodation for students with learning disabilities such as dyslexia typically includes no modification of content but instead assistance in the form of additional time at formal examinations; these students may also be allowed to type instead of hand-write final exam papers and a trained/willing tutor in assessing the written product of dyslexic students evaluates the student’s competency. If a student with a learning disability does not self-identify to the SLDD then no provision is made within foundation courses. Similarly, students who because of the nature of assignments within the course may wish to incorporate differently-able students into group activities are left to their own devices. No material is provided to them from the course/department to facilitate or maximise interaction with a differently-able peer.

In terms of delivery as indicated earlier, the lecture mode dominates and while the disadvantages of this mode have been fairly well-documented (Bligh, 1998; Cashin, 1988; Finkel, 2000), the advantage remains that it allows for the dissemination of material to a large group at
the same time. There are also strategies such as breaking up lectures with “short cooperative processing times” which can assist in maximising learning opportunities within the lecture (Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). The forum also facilitates question and answer periods where misconceptions or misunderstandings can be quickly addressed; however, this mode assumes that all students present can see, hear and follow at the same pace the content-rich slides presented. Tutorial sessions on the other hand are much smaller and intimate. Tutorials allow students an opportunity to practice skills- primarily language and organization under the supervision of an assigned tutor. The collaborative environment also encourages all the benefits of collaborative learning. Still, because the venues are small- twenty chairs organized around a long central table with a white board at the front of the room, there is limited room for physical movement or re-organization of the space. These sessions are also approximately one hour long and tutors have complained that there is very little time to explore creative ways of meeting the curriculum objectives assigned. If the course is therefore to meet the needs of a diverse student population a re-conceptualization of teaching is imperative.

The Problem
The current problem manifests when teaching foundation courses at the tertiary level that includes teaching students with special educational needs (SEN) in the same spaces as those students without SEN. Students with SEN often experience reduced accessibility as special needs considerations are not viewed as a significant part of Schulman’s five key elements: vision, design, interactions, outcomes and analysis.

Objectives
The main objectives of this paper are firstly, to review the traditional modes of presenting foundation courses with a focus on EAP. Secondly, to suggest various modes of presentation which are useful for students with various types of exceptionalities. Finally, discussions, recommendations and conclusions will be presented.

Guiding Questions
The following questions will guide the discussions:
1. At the tertiary level, how have foundation courses traditionally been presented?
2. What are the recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses so as to cater for exceptional individuals in the classroom?
3. How can an evaluation of both approaches improve practice in tertiary level classrooms?

Review of the Literature

In the literature review section which follows we examine inclusive teaching and learning at higher education, the theories that have traditionally underpinned the teaching of foundation courses and move from there to consider pedagogical issues raised by Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and Differentiated Instruction (DI) as two specific approaches that pinpoint areas in which avenues for creating a more inclusive learning environment within language teaching at the tertiary level can be conceived. Students with SEN are generally regarded as those students who need adjustment to curriculum and/or teaching techniques to function effectively in the learning environment. Students with SEN range from the most profound of disabilities to those students who may be gifted and talented; this broad range of need demands not only variability in classroom response but also a continuum of placement options to meet the educational needs of all students at The UWI. There are some 13 recognized disability categories according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004). Referred to hereinafter as IDEA (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2013). The likelihood of students with any one or more of the IDEA categories of need presenting in a classroom at the tertiary level varies depending on the prevalence estimates at this level. In keeping with international prevalence estimates, the occurrence of students with learning disabilities and difficulties in classrooms is more likely to occur than other categories of special educational need. In general, Learning Disabilities account for 50% of all disabilities which present in classroom settings (Hallahan, Kauffman & Pullen, 2013). Other common categories of educational need include emotional and behavioural disabilities, difficulties with hyperactivity and attention/inattention, physical disabilities, and sensory disabilities such as blindness/visual impairment and deafness/hearing impairment. Recognizing that students will present with SEN demands a response in the form of course design, adaptations, accommodations and the use of enhanced technologies in the classroom.

Thomas and May (2010) posited that inclusive teaching and learning can be viewed as “the design of curriculum and pedagogy to facilitate an inclusive community of learning for all students, whatever their background, and which challenges and supports individuals to achieve
their full potential” (p. 19). This is applicable at all levels. Traditionally, the efforts geared at the paradigm shift towards a more inclusive education system have been focused at the primary and secondary level. However, in recent years, higher education has become more inclusive; but, the curriculum and teaching methods have not been altered sufficiently in response to incorporating diverse students and meeting their unique educational aspirations. The one-size-fits-all, traditional model of lecture-style teaching and teacher-driven education continues to dominate at the tertiary level (Dosch & Zidon, 2014).

**Principles of English for Academic Purposes**

The traditional format for the presentation of foundation courses which include English for Academic Purposes, has hinged on two main approaches to the teaching of English at the tertiary level. There is the genre-based approach, coming out of the work of Swales (1981, 1990) and Bhatia (1991, 1993) which theorizes that students can be taught to master the requirements of a specific writing style or genre by analysing the frequency with which certain linguistic patterns or moves are repeated. Genre theory is therefore broadly concerned with the ways in which individuals use language within specific communicative contexts and how they draw on their knowledge to make appropriate choices suitable to context. Writing is seen according to this view as a social practice modified by the context in which it is required (Hyland, 2003). Good writing is therefore not confined to a universal standard but is influenced by the environment - school, work, home in which it is practiced. Text and context are thus the two pivotal axes on which student learning is pinned (Hyland, 2003). Genre-based teaching to some extent is seen as part of the backlash to process teaching which advocates that through a process of practicing models provided by the teacher, students can learn to produce error-free writing. Multiple drafts, feedback, a cycle of prewriting and drafting - moving towards the completion of an edited, finished product, the incorporation of peer review are hallmarks of the process approach.

Critics of the process approach argue that the emphasis on learner autonomy leaves little room for “ways of scaffolding students’ learning and using knowledge of language to guide them towards a conscious understanding of target genres and the ways language creates meaning in context” (Hyland, 2003, p. 21). There are others though like Badger and White (2000) who argue that genre and process approaches to writing should be seen as complementary rather than opposing approaches. They point out that both see writing as primarily a linguistic activity- though with greater emphasis being placed on social context in genre-based
writing. Seemingly in line with genre-based approaches, each foundation course emphasizes a particular style of writing deemed suitable to a specific context - there is thus a foundation course for science students, one for law/literature students. EAP with its focus on expository writing is seen as the one with the widest applicability to the tertiary writing environment. Within each course there is emphasis - in line with process approaches - on the importance of drafting, peer feedback and evaluation. Research has also shown that good feedback is important to helping learners to be able to self-assess and improve their learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2005). One criticism raised however about process/product approaches is the devaluation of prior skills of the learner. This is a significant criticism in light of the focus of this paper. As has been shown, the present structure of foundation courses gives little consideration to the skills that a differently-able learner may possess and while the present curriculum focus of the course is developed around a process core of pre-writing, drafting, editing as well as consideration for audience needs and context, there is also a need to consider context from the perspective of learners with different abilities. UDL offers an approach through which the benefits of both the genre and process approaches can be employed for maximum learner benefit.

**Universal Design for Learning Format**

The UDL concept has its genesis in the discipline of architecture. UDL was first developed by Anne Meyer and David H. Rose, co-founders of Centre for Applied Special Technology (CAST) - a non-profit organisation (2000). UDL is a set of principles geared towards the development of curriculum and supporting instructional materials and activities that make participatory and learning goals achievable by students with notable differences in their ability to see, hear, speak, move, read, write understand English, attend, organize, engage and remember. UDL is underpinned by three basic principles: (1) Multiple Means of Representation, (2) Multiple means of Expression, and (3) Multiple Means of engagement.

The first principle underlying UDL is the belief that there are multiple ways of representing knowledge during the learning process. Representation is defined in the literature as designing instructional materials that make content accessible to the greatest number of diverse learners (Capp, 2017). Hitchcock et al. (as cited in Capp, 2017) elaborated by recommending the use of multiple examples which allow classroom teachers to highlight the critical features of a concept and differentiate that concept from others. This facilitates both deeper engagement and broader
access to the concept. Scaffolding is a strategy that complements this principle as it identifies for students, relevant information and potential solutions, thus simplifying tasks (Coyne, Pisha, Dalton, Zeph, & Smith, 2012). Secondly, Multiple means of Expression is based on the premise that students can demonstrate their action and expression in many ways. Moreover, proponents advance that providing students with control of their education and choice of activities increases student engagement. Thus, by providing students with choice in terms of both how they access information, and represent their knowledge and understanding, accessibility to the learning process is increased for all students (Katz, 2016). Multiple means of Engagement is the final principle underlying the UDL framework. Student engagement is generally a secondary outcome measure of using principles one and two of UDL to improve the learning process (Capp, 2017), therefore, within the UDL framework, providing multiple means of representation and expression leads to student engagement. Each UDL principle can be implemented by adhering to a set of accompanying supporting principles which direct classroom delivery and the creation of classroom instructional materials (Meyer & Rose, 2006; National Center on UDL, n. d.). For example, it is noteworthy that technology integration underpins each principle of UDL as it provides both the teacher with a means of representing knowledge in multiple ways, and students with a means of demonstrating their understanding in multiple ways (LaRocco & Wilken, 2013).

**Differentiated Instruction**

In explaining a differentiated classroom, Tomlinson (2014) notes that there are two “givens” which are critical. Firstly, there are content requirements and secondly, there are learners who are all unique and therefore vary in how they engage in the teaching and learning process. The philosophy that underpins activity in a differentiated classroom is that a nurturing environment promotes learning. Tomlinson further posits that differentiation is a teacher’s proactive response to a variety of learner needs and this response is shaped by the teacher’s mind-set and philosophy. Teachers who utilize DI take into consideration multiple aspects of learners to best meet their educational needs. Three diagnostic formative components are utilized to best understand personal characteristics of students and their academic skills: readiness, interest, and learning profile (Tomlinson, 2001). Student readiness refers to a student’s proximity to the desired educational outcome based on background foundational knowledge, past experiences, opportunities for learning, and skill level. Student interest is akin to intrinsic motivation
because if one taps into a student’s interest, motivation is increased (Dosch & Zidon, 2014). Finally, a student’s learning profile is defined as “a preference for taking in, exploring, or expressing content” (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010, p. 17)

Additionally, the teacher’s response will be guided by the following general principles of differentiation: an environment that encourages and supports learning, quality curriculum, assessment that informs teaching and learning, instruction that responds to student variance and leading students and managing routines. Teachers can therefore differentiate through Content, Process, Product, Affect/Environment. Content is therefore that body of information conveyed in teaching/learning. Process is the mechanism by which students actually learn the content. Product is the output, the way in which students demonstrate learned content. Affect/Environment is the feel or tone in the classroom. How students actually deal with the teacher’s methods will depend on their readiness, interest and learning profile. Teachers will use a variety of instructional tools in proactive response to the two givens content and learner needs. Tomlinson (2001) highlights the flow of instruction that guides a differentiated classroom moves from whole class preparation, to review and sharing, to individual or small group engagement.

The literature has revealed the success of DI at the primary and secondary level, but only a few studies have tackled the effects at the tertiary level. However, of the few, there is cause for some optimism as Livingston (2006) found success utilizing differentiated instruction in his undergraduate education course and a 2010 study revealed that the students successfully met the course objectives and that the participants in the experimental sections perceived the course more positively due to the differentiated methods of instruction (Chamberlin & Powers, 2010). Furthermore, in a local study, Joseph, Thomas, Simonette and Ramsook (2013) concluded that “modeling differentiated instruction at the tertiary level yielded more positive than negative outcomes” p.39. Additionally, it was highlighted that student perceptions of differentiated instruction were also encouraging with 90% agreeing that the differentiated instructional approach stimulated their interest in the curriculum studies course and the majority reported higher levels of intellectual growth as a result of exposure to differentiated instruction (Joseph et. al., 2013).

Discussion

Applying the lens of UDL to foundation courses in general raises the following concerns. Firstly, present course delivery is not suitable for all students as it is based on one size fits all, one premise is that all students
can write. Secondly, content is delivered mainly verbally without special
collection for the physically impaired, the hearing impaired or the
visually impaired. Thirdly, there is the issue of time. The English
Language Foundation Unit does provide writing workshops in the form of
grammar and writing but the limited time period for each session does not
necessarily facilitate the needs of the special learner. A UDL approach to
teaching advocates for a variety of modes of expression. This UDL
principle requires multiple modes of representation, but in this course there
are no alternatives to auditory information within the classroom. UDL also
promotes multiple modes of action, currently within course material and
delivery there are few illustrations of concepts non-linguistically. An
accurate description of FOUN 1001 indicates no integration of assistive
technologies and no choice of media for communication.

A Differentiated Foundation Course
The acquisition of information, behavioural skills and attitudinal change
as identified by Bligh (1998) still remain key areas of focus at the tertiary
level, but these can still be achieved taking into account special needs. An
examination of FOUN 1001 reveals that there is a strong base that can be
enhanced through the application of UDL. The description, purpose, goals
and objectives remain the same. A few adjustments therefore can assist in
fully realizing the objectives of the course for all learners. Content,
organisation, teaching strategies and assessments would be the focus of
change. Each of these is taken below:

Content
Weimar (2002) points to the importance of adopting teaching strategies
that would ensure a “learning-rich” environment for all learners is
maximized. Thus, in EAP intensity and depth would be the two main areas
of concentration for students with learning disabilities. These would have
to be tailored to cater for learners who require different levels of
specificity. Stages of the writing process for example, can be explained
either as simple one-line statements or more complex paragraphs going
into specific detail at each stage. Similarly, when discussing expository
strategies, since there are choices linked to assessment, the choice can be
made considering the limitations each student may have. Students can be
specifically steered into a particular strategy by making the instruction for
that specific strategy more detailed than another. Brueggemann, White,
Dunn, Hefferon, and Cheu (2001) argue for the adoption of non-
traditional means of assessment within the composition classroom that
cater for students with special needs, so that where
written proposals, outlines or early drafts are required experiment with drawing, sculpting or dramatizing the plan. Being asked to conceptualize a project from a different perspective can trigger new insights for all writers, helping us generate connections we might not have made in word-locked prose. (p. 381)

This means that all students can benefit from a learning environment that encourages pedagogical diversity.

**Organisation**

Organisation can be amended to include a continuum of groupings by numbers. The advantages of cooperative learning have been well-documented (Bonwell & Sutherland 1996; Gibbs & Simpson, 2005; Oakley, Felder, Brent, & Elhajj, 2004). Evenbeck, Ross, and Kinzie (2010) also advocate for “interaction with diversity” as a means of encouraging students from different faculties, backgrounds and skills opportunities to work together in groups. There is even research to show that the optimum group size for learning consists of three to five members (Oakley et al., 2004); however, consideration has to be given to the fact that for students with learning challenges, groups of two might be optimum - with accommodation also being made for those learners who may need to work by themselves.

**Teaching Strategies**

Lectures or plenary sessions need to move beyond “chalk and talk”. The PowerPoint should be used expertly, avoiding the overuse of text. Even at the tertiary level many learners are visual learners. More use must be made of graphics and graphic organizers in order to facilitate wider participation. Students can easily slip through the cracks if careful monitoring is not done. In support of technology integration, Kennedy and Deschler (2010) suggest that “literacy instruction should reflect multimedia design principles that are a match for the cognitive learning needs of the intended population of learners” (p. 293). For learners with challenges a multimodal approach is recommended that incorporates both the oral and written word; a variety of practice opportunities and one on one instruction, incorporating where possible the use of assistive technologies (Leons, 2013).

**Course Assessment**

Generally, students with special needs perform better on coursework than they do under examination conditions. A flexible divide between the percentage for coursework and the final exam needs to be considered for
students presenting evidence of special needs. Consideration should also be given for alternative forms of assessment aside from paper and pencil. Giving students extra time to complete assignments should also be considered (Aithal & Kumar, 2016).

Students with special needs should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their mastery of content through portfolios, oral assessments and even through 100% in course continuous assessment. Again, ample use must be made of both low-tech and high-tech devices for assessment as well as for teaching and learning within the course. Variable modifications to credit assessments should be incorporated in the whole assessment framework. A variety of rubrics should be provided to accommodate for modifications to both course content and assessment responses.

Independent Study
While the myElearning component of the course offers opportunities for self-paced learning, further infusion of technology is required in the form of text to speech devices which work well for students with mild to moderate reading difficulties. And while there is a cost to the incorporation of these devices, this also has to be balanced against the fact that the creation of a more inclusive learning environment will also give the University a competitive edge in an increasingly aggressive educational marketplace. There must also be some re-calibration of course policies. Classes and mandatory attendance for students for example, need to be balanced against what is available in the physical environment as regards accessibility to students in wheelchairs, crutches and tutorial rooms. Adjustments can be made to provide alternative means of attendance such as teleconferencing using platforms like Zoom and Moxtra where students who are physically challenged can access both plenary and tutorial sessions.

Recommendations

Teacher Education
Although, The UWI since 2006 has mandated that all incoming lecturers be trained in the Master of Higher Education (M.HEd.) or The UWI Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning (CUTL) programmes to ensure quality and standardized training at the tertiary level, there is need to incorporate techniques to equip lecturers to recognize and respond to diverse learning needs within the tertiary level classroom. While adult learners will take greater responsibility for their learning than learners at
other levels of the education system, these adult learners still need the informed consideration of tertiary level facilitators. In a seminal study Wong and Wilson (1984) concluded that when students with learning challenges are taught how to organize ideas around core subtopics related to expository writing they were able to move successfully to understanding how to put together paragraphs. This is particularly important in teaching expository writing, particularly as Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, and Baker (2001) observe that students “with learning disabilities have more difficulty learning about basic text structures such as compare-contrast and cause-effect” (p. 297). Teachers who are trained in strategy instruction methods for example, can show learners “…how to attack expository material, to become more deliberate and active in processing it” (p. 298). The reality is also that students are moving up the education ladder and as such the end product is influenced by what has happened in the primary and secondary schools. Linkages will provide a seamless transition and ensure that at all levels teachers are aware, prepared and facilitating the development of all learners using similar concepts, ideas and practices throughout. Teacher education is thus a critical component moving forward.

Architectural Design

As the university continues to physically expand, thought must be given to the construction of spaces of learning that help in the creation of environments that are conducive for learning for a diverse population. The fixed design currently employed mitigates against this. Bennet (2007) makes a convincing case for paying attention to the physical design in higher learning:

We often start the design of learning spaces with service and operational considerations rather than with questions about the character of the learning we want to happen in the space . . . The better we understand the design elements that afford college students opportunities to learn and the spaces in which students may act on these opportunities, the more likely we are to design successfully and get full value from our investment in learning spaces. (p. 14-15)

Each category of need requires unique plans to respond to individual needs. Considering the requirements of a diverse learning population is another critical component of encouraging best practice at The UWI.
Classroom Interaction
The fixed one-hour tutorial format should be changed to allow students with special needs the opportunity to access one on one sessions or small group sessions where meeting individual needs will be easier. Some strategies that have been employed by other higher educational institutions include making course material available in more than one format - sometimes in a simplified version; increasing classroom assessment to include forms that do not incur marks but serve as developmental markers for learning challenged students; and assigning student mentors to assist challenged students (Athler & Kumar, 2016). The cry is always resources but providing for the needs of a diverse population is one of the strategies that universities are investing in to build their student intake.

Cross Faculty Collaboration
The study also indicates a need for more cross faculty collaboration for the collection of data to determine which changes need to be made to facilitate all learners utilizing best practice. One of the things that was most evident in approaching this study was the paucity of data on the intake and throughput of students with special needs at The UWI. Cross faculty collaboration is needed to research pertinent issues such as how identified students perform across different subject areas? What are the strategies being used in different faculties to teach a diverse learning population? Can these strategies be successfully deployed in other subject areas? What can be done to assist the self-perception of learning challenged students who exist in a wider societal context that stigmatizes difference? Are there faculty procedures or cross-faculty endeavours that can assist? Changes in administrative policies are needed. Much more in terms of support needs to be done to assist the SLDD. Athler and Kumar (2016) point to the practice of relaxing 5 percent of the minimum marks on entry level tests for incoming students who meet the general entry level requirements as a means of encouraging their pursuit of higher education and following this up with organized support measures through their study.

Conclusion
Foundation courses such as EAP which target a wide cross-section of the student population should lead the way forward as models of inclusive opportunities explored and served at the tertiary level. A move away from traditional teaching and towards teaching as scholarship will ensure that the needs of all students are met within these inclusive opportunities. The recommended approaches for teaching foundation courses are UDL and
differentiated instruction. These teaching strategies will address the problem of meeting the challenges that diverse learners in the classroom pose. Additionally, adjustments in the areas of teacher education, architectural design, classroom interactions, and cross faculty collaboration are seen as key to enhanced accessibility for learners with special learning needs at the tertiary level.

References


PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN BARBADOS: Applications of the Pre-Service Emerging Reflective Teacher Training (PERTT) Model

Donna-Maria B. Maynard and Mia Amour Jules

One of the barriers to the development and adoption of inclusive education philosophies and practices “is the lacklustre will of [in-service] teachers to participate in the paradigm shift toward inclusive education.” In Barbados there are no pre-service teacher training programmes in inclusive education. Pre-service education is critical to the development of the reflective teacher; one who has developed the core psychological constituents needed to demonstrate effective inclusive education practices. We argue that, prospective teachers through pre-service training, can learn to effectively integrate and utilize inclusive education practices that respond to individual differences and change attitudes towards diversity, which will contribute to a just and non-discriminatory society. The principles underpinning the pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model were applied and quantitatively and qualitatively explored in a sample of Barbadian teachers, and the findings highlight the importance of the psychosocial mechanisms through which an ‘inclusive philosophy’ in a pre-service teacher training framework can emerge.

Introduction

Research Problem
Inclusive education is, “an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of . . . students” (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3). In Barbados there has been some recognition of the importance of inclusive education and as such, over the past two decades the Government of Barbados has provided in-service teacher training in the areas of special needs education and inclusive education while working towards policy to implement all aspects of inclusion across the education landscape (Development of Education National Report of Barbados, 2008). However, research conducted in Barbados has found that one of the barriers to the development and adoption of an inclusive philosophy and inclusive practices among in-service teachers, “is the lacklustre will of teachers to participate in the paradigm shift toward

Moreover, in another study, it was found that some untrained teachers in Barbados lacked adequate pedagogical knowledge prior to receiving in-service teacher training and that many untrained teachers were more likely to be resistant to new knowledge, “as they already think that they know what they need, in order to teach effectively” (Jones, 1997, p.176).

These findings demonstrate the need for pre-service training if teachers are to adequately and wholeheartedly adopt inclusive education teaching practices in the classroom. This is because pre-service training establishes the foundation for continuous development of teachers as reflective lifelong learners (Jules & Maynard, 2015); professionals who are constantly challenging themselves to diversify their craft to suit the unique and varied needs of their students. For the purpose of this paper pre-service training is defined as teacher training provided for prospective teachers who are yet to enter the teaching profession (Fajet, Bello, Leftwich, Mesler & Shaver, 2005).

The Need for Pre-Service Teacher Training in Barbados

In 1993 the need for pre-service teacher training was recognised by the Cabinet of Barbados, as Erdiston Teachers’ College was required to deliver pre-service teacher training (Lucas, 1996). Despite this governmental mandate, pre-service teacher training continues to be a critical gap in the teacher education system in Barbados. More recently, as stated by the acting Chief Education Officer of Barbados, Karen Best, “there are significant numbers of teachers in secondary schools without professional qualifications [and] . . . too many teachers . . . are untrained and unable to access training and worst yet, indifferent to training” (Thompson, 2012, p.1). Supporting these sentiments, the Minister of Education in 2013 stated that Barbadian teachers need to constantly reflect on their teaching methodologies and explained that there is a need for more “self-reflective practitioners” in the country (Gill, 2013, p.1). Hence, irrespective of the move towards adopting inclusive practices within Barbadian classrooms, the current teacher training system employed in Barbados must be interrogated if the true benefits of inclusion are to be realized.

In today’s schools it is inevitable that teachers are going to have to work with students who have exceptional needs. The concept of inclusion “…has moved far beyond the narrow perception of inclusion as a means of understanding and overcoming a deficit . . . it is defined much more broadly and encompasses issues of universal involvement, access,
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participation and achievement (Ouane, 2008, p.19).” Hence, it is critical that teachers enter the classroom with a full understanding of inclusive education so that they can effectively teach and reach every individual student. Therefore, it is argued that inclusive education in Barbados should begin prior to teachers being placed before the classroom. Application of the pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model (Jules & Maynard, 2015) is engaged to highlight the psychosocial theoretical mechanisms through which an ‘inclusive education philosophy’ in a pre-service teacher training framework can emerge. Through the adoption of the PERTT model prospective teachers can learn how to effectively integrate and utilize inclusive education practices in order to respond to individual differences and change attitudes towards diversity, all of which will contribute to a just and non-discriminatory society.

The Pre-Service Emerging Reflective Teacher Training Model

The pre-service emerging reflective teacher training (PERTT) model provides a theoretical account of the psychosocial pathways which contribute to the development of core psychological constituents of the emerging reflective teacher. Those constituents include self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-regulation (Jules & Maynard, 2015). Hence, the PERTT model when applied to inclusive education proposes that teacher-trainees should first be allowed to acquire and assimilate pedagogical theory, instead of engaging in trial and error learning.

The PERTT model is comprised of two systems and three subsystems which contribute to the pre-service teacher education training environment (Figure 1). The initial psychosocial system is characterized by the intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions between the teacher educator, trainee and peers. Hence, the psychosocial system encompasses three subsystems: trainee-to-teacher educator; trainee-to-peer and trainee-to-self. As the emerging reflective teacher develops, these subsystems provide five interpersonal process outcomes which are: reflective practices, scaffolding, guidance and support, modelled behaviours and reinforcement from teacher educators and peers. The structural system encapsulates the psychosocial system and provides resources, both human and physical to the pre-service training programme. We are therefore proposing that an inclusive philosophy can be incorporated into a pre-service training programme within the Barbadian context along the same pathways outlined by the PERTT model.

It is theorised that the infusion of inclusive curricula within a pre-service training framework would increase the likelihood that the trainee
teacher, prior to entering the classroom, would have an understanding and appreciation for all student exceptionalities and is likely to engage in a reflective process from the outset. The development of the core psychological constituents of self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation within the context of inclusive education would ensure that the emerging reflective teacher over time is able to hone teaching skills underpinned by an inclusive philosophy which will ultimately help to shape and guide inclusive practices in schools.

**Study Objectives**

Given that the theoretical pathways of the PERTT model will be investigated the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To determine the perceived importance of reflective practices, scaffolding, guidance and support, modelled behaviours and reinforcement from teacher educators and peers.

2. To determine the perceived importance of providing physical infrastructure to an inclusive education pre-service training environment.

3. To explore emergent themes to understand teachers’ perceptions about the perceived importance of the interpersonal outcomes of the PERTT model to the development of the characteristics of the reflective inclusive educator.

**Methodology**

**Research Design**

A mixed methods research design, more specifically, a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009) was employed to explore the mechanisms underlying the PERTT model; mechanisms hypothesized as being important to the development of the emerging reflective inclusive educator. Quantitative data analysis was given least weight as descriptive statistics (frequencies and means) were used to probe the first two objectives of the study. While qualitative analyses (the dominant mode of analysis of the study) were used to probe all three of the study objectives. It was in this way that a richer understanding of the descriptive findings was obtained. Given the heavy demand on teachers’ time the concurrent collection of quantitative and qualitative data was deemed appropriate in this study.
Participants
A purposive sample of ten trained teachers (see table 1) were surveyed in order to discover their perceptions of the relative importance of underlying psychosocial pathways and tenets of the PERTT model within the context of reflective teaching and inclusive education practices in schools. Ten teachers were sampled, of which six were male and four were female and they ranged in age from 25–65 years (mean age = 42.8). All of the participants had received teacher training to the level of Diploma in Education, from the teacher training college in Barbados and had graduated between 1975 and 2016. They had been teaching in the public-school system between 3 - 46 years (mean number of years of teaching experience = 20.3). These teachers were conceptualized as experts of the education system who are in the best position to offer explanations about the applicability of the PERTT framework to a pre-service inclusive education teacher training programme.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher no.</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years teaching</th>
<th>Year of graduation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 7</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 8</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrument

Teachers completed a semi-structured questionnaire designed by the researchers to capture the key characteristics of the teacher trainee environment with integrated inclusive education philosophy and practices. Questionnaires were used as teachers were selected from various schools. The semi-structured questionnaires allowed for the use of both closed and open-ended questions which enables a mix of qualitative and quantitative information to be gathered. Hence, allowing the researcher to better understand the views of the participants. The instrument development was based on the theoretical framework of the PERTT model. The questionnaire developed consisted of two sections. The first section encompassed general questions about background variables of the teachers: age, gender, years of experience as a teacher, and the year of graduation from the Diploma in Education teacher training programme.

In the second section of the questionnaire, the teachers were asked questions based on the PERTT model. The questions were designed to capture the teachers' subjective attitudes about the relevance of the interpersonal outcomes of the PERTT model to pre-service inclusive education. A five-point single item Likert scale response format was used to answer 10 closed-ended questions in addition to 10 corresponding open-ended questions, where participants were able to explain their quantitative answers. The following are examples of the kinds of items used for some of the constructs investigated: “In your opinion, how important do you think it is for instructors to provide teacher-trainees with opportunities to reflect on the use of inclusive practices when in training?”; “To what extent do you agree that peer reinforcement is important to the development of inclusive education competencies during teacher training?”; and, “In your opinion, how important is it for instructors to tailor the difficulty of assigned tasks overtime when teaching inclusive education practices during teacher training?”.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from The University of the West Indies (Cave Hill) Ethics Committee. Participants were required to sign a paper-based consent form before they completed the questionnaire. Through the use of an information sheet, participants were informed of the purpose of the research. Participants were also assured of anonymity and informed about their rights to participate and voluntarily withdraw from the study at any point in time for the duration of the research.
Data Analysis

In order to address the research objectives a partially mixed concurrent dominant status design, QUAL-Quan mixed methods design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009), was utilised. For the quantitative data, descriptive analyses were conducted to provide an overview of the participants’ demographic characteristics and years of teaching experience. In addition, frequencies were presented for responses to the closed-ended questions which probed the perceived importance of the five interpersonal process outcomes of the PERTT model. Whereas content and thematic analyses were used to analyse the qualitative data obtained. As is customary with this research design, the quantitative and qualitative data were analysed separately before being compared and inferences discussed (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

A three-level categorization system was employed for text analysis of the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions of the semi-structured questionnaire. The categories included: (1) low-level text-based categories, (2) middle-level theme, and (3) high-level theoretical constructs (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). This three-tiered organizational framework was used to provide the abstract bridge between the project concerns and those of the respondents. Themes emerged in the qualitative data that provided clarification of the teachers’ perceptions obtained during the quantitative aspect of the study. These themes were described and illustrated by representative quotes from the teachers. In the section to follow the findings will be discussed through the theoretical lens of the PERTT model and relevant literature.

Findings

Quantitative Results

All of the participants reported that they thought it was very important to absolutely essential for instructors to provide teacher-trainees with opportunities to reflect on the use of inclusive practices, receive guidance and support, as well as be exposed to appropriate models when learning inclusive pedagogy in a pre-service training environment. Generally, the majority of respondents viewed reinforcement and instructional scaffolding as being of average importance to absolutely essential to pre-service teacher training in inclusive education (see Table 2). Moreover, as shown in Table 3, the importance of peer collaboration to the development of inclusive education skill sets was exemplified by the responses of the participants. Teachers generally reported agreement with the importance of reflective practices, guidance and support, reinforcement and modelled
behaviours being facilitated within the teacher training peer group. Furthermore, physical resources were deemed as very important to absolutely essential by the majority of the respondents (see Table 4).

**Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative findings will be presented in the following section. Each of the interpersonal process outcomes of the PERTT model are explained in detail via the emergent themes. Examples from the voices of the teachers are included for each theme.

*Themes supporting the importance of reflective practices*

i. Inclusive teaching strategies are perceived to be better assessed through reflection.

All teachers sampled were of the view that trainees’ ability to moderate one’s thoughts about the use of inclusive pedagogy would likely increase as a result of their engagement in reflective practices. For example, it was found that reflective activities would teach trainees how to “review...teaching strategies” (Teacher #1) and engage in, “critical analysis on used methods” (Teacher #8). Moreover, trainees would learn skill sets to discern the “positive and negative areas of lessons” (Teacher #3) and understand when to “maintain what works” (Teacher #10).

ii. Reflection can contribute to an inclusive teaching philosophy.

It was the opinion of one teacher that, “the more reflective a teacher is...the better student learning activities are [as]...classrooms have persons of various cognitive abilities and learning styles” (Teacher #7). Another teacher suggested that engagement in reflective practices would increase trainees’ understanding that one should strive to, “be creative” and that it is important to, “assist their students to engage in the same [reflective] processes as part of their [future students’] learning how to learn” (Teacher #5). Hence, attitudes about how to teach trainees and how best to transfer knowledge to their future students, is likely to develop when given opportunities to reflect within a pre-service environment.
### Table 2. Perceived Importance of the Interpersonal Outcomes of the Trainee - Teacher Educator Subsystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and support</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelled Behaviours</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructional Scaffolding</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 3. Level of Agreement Regarding the Occurrence of the Interpersonal Outcomes of the Trainee - Peer Subsystem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived agreement with the occurrence of:</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective practices</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guidance and support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reinforcement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modelled Behaviours</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Perceived Importance of Physical Resources to Outcomes of the Trainee - Teacher Educator Subsystem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Frequency of Participant Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived importance of:</td>
<td>Not important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
iii. Reflection can allow for the modification and improvement of inclusive teaching strategies.

As explained by three teachers, reflection within a pre-service training environment would likely lead to the, “[development of] better [teaching] strategies” (Teacher #4), contribute to a “change of approach” (Teacher #8) thereby resulting in “improvements” (Teacher #10) to teaching methodologies in inclusive education.

iv. The capacity to analyse the inclusive teaching methodologies of peers can develop through collaborative reflection.

Due to the benefits of peer collaboration trainees are more likely to be provided with opportunities to, “. . . analyse each other” (Teacher #3) and engage in, “cooperative assessment” (Teacher #1). Teachers were also of the opinion that such an interactive process would occur due to the fact that, “two heads are better than one” (Teacher #1) and that collaboration among colleagues “promotes social cohesion” (Teacher #3).

v. The pool of inclusive education knowledge available to teachers can increase through collaborative reflection.

This, according to the teachers sampled is likely to occur due to opportunities for peers to engage in, “. . . reassessment of teaching strategies” (Teacher #1) and that fellow trainees can, “offer advice on methods of improving each other’s lessons” (Teacher #3). Moreover, peer interactions can, “lead to the sharing of best practices by persons in direct contact with what is happening in the classroom” (Teacher #7).

Themes supporting the importance of guidance and support

i. Trainees are viewed as being inexperienced and lack preparedness.

One teacher described trainees as, “newbies” (Teacher #4) and because, “trainees . . . usually lack experience” (Teacher #1), it was felt that “trainees must be given assurances that they are on the right track” (Teacher #6)

ii. Through emotional and cognitive support instructors can ensure that trainees remain focussed as they acquire skills.

By, “reducing discouraging demotivating experiences on the part of the trainee” (Teacher #1) teacher educators contribute to the personal growth and development of inclusive education competencies. Moreover, teacher educators, “[provide] opportunities for discussion and support as issues arise” (Teacher #6) and are expected to, “encourage their student[s] to press on and complete the course [in order to] ensure continuous success
and improvement of their students” (Teacher #3).

iii. Trainee-to-peer interactions can create an accepting learning environment for inclusive pedagogy.
As stated by one teacher, “peer assessment... and evaluation of lesson outcomes are non-punitive or non-threatening” (Teacher #1). In addition, interactions with colleagues in training are more likely to facilitate the, “sharing of ideas” (Teacher #3) and due to the view that, “… collaboration and collegiality ... are important ingredients for . . . growth “(Teacher #5); “peer teaching [and] peer evaluations are [considered to be] helpful” (Teacher #7).

iv. Guidance and support from peers can increase trainees’ beliefs in their inclusive pedagogical abilities.
This is because the peer group is able to, “aid in confidence building [and] encourages [the] trainee to be more adventurous in the implementation of a variety of teaching strategies” (Teacher #1). In addition, guidance and support from peers, “. . . boosts morale and esteem within the teacher-trainee” (Teacher #3).

v. Peers can be conceptualized as “more knowledgeable others” due to the guidance and support they provide.
As one teacher stated, peers can, “assist ‘weaker’ students who are experiencing challenges or having misconceptions” (Teacher #3). Others mentioned that peers are more likely to provide actual, “cases and trials” (Teacher #8). Moreover, they, ”are the ones in the field and are therefore the best persons to give guidance [and] tips” (Teacher #6). The instruction provided by peers then acts to consolidate and support the material introduced by teacher educators in the training programme.

Themes supporting the importance of reinforcement
i. Reinforcement from teacher educators can serve to increase trainees’ use of inclusive pedagogical skill sets.
Teachers were of the opinion that any incentive received would be geared towards the, “promotion of greater effort” (Teacher #1) when learning inclusive teaching strategies and would act to “boost and motivate trainee teachers” (Teacher #3).

ii. Reinforcement from teacher educators can denote the value of the utilization of inclusive teaching strategies.
As one teacher explained, incentives are likely to, “increase the value attached to the skill” (Teacher #4). Another explained that, “if the trainee believes that it is not relevant to their situations, they may not place emphasis on its development [for example] . . . a project for marks rather than a mention through discussion in class would be better” (Teacher #6). It was also felt that, “incentives help to reinforce the activities, behaviour and priority of the inclusive education” (Teacher #7).

iii. Peer reinforcement can increase a teacher’s confidence to independently use inclusive education skill sets. This is because, “peer reinforcement is another opportunity to the teacher trainee to gain confidence. Confidence is extremely important to any teacher especially when supports are removed” (Teacher #1). Another teacher was of the opinion that incentives from peers can act to, “encourage steadfastness” (Teacher #3).

iv. Adoption of favourable attitudes towards the use of inclusive education strategies can increase from peer reinforcement. This is because the reinforcement obtained from peers, “fosters support for [an inclusive] style of teaching” (Teacher #7) and trainees are able to “gather other views and [receive] support to continue” (Teacher #4). Moreover, trainees come to understand from peer incentives that the use of inclusive practices, “become an experience rather than remain a mere concept” (Teacher #5) thereby making it more meaningful to their teaching practice.

Themes supporting the importance of modelling behaviours
i. Inclusive teaching strategies are perceived to be better acquired and learnt through modelling.

All teachers sampled were of the view that it is very important for instructors to model inclusive education practices and viewed the modelling of behaviours as an ideal teaching strategy for conveying the relevance of inclusive practices in the classroom. For example, it was found that modelling would provide trainees with the opportunity to, “... see theory in practice in an objective manner. They themselves can assess strategy outcomes” (Teacher #1). Furthermore, it was reported that modelling allows for “trainee-teachers [to] visually analyse and critique their tutors when it comes to judging appropriate or inappropriate behaviours” (Teacher #3).
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ii. Modelling of inclusive education practices by instructors is considered to be essential in the teacher training environment. It was noted that, “students model what they see” (Teacher #4). This is especially the case for trainees, as teachers reported that trainees are “...better able to translate observed behaviours into actions” (Teacher #5) and “... it is easier for the trainees if they see through demonstration” (Teacher #6). In addition, “modelling behaviour aid in assisting young, new teachers who may be unsure or sceptical about certain aspects of teaching . . . [as] modelling is considered a ‘best practice’ method” (Teacher #3). Hence, inclusive education pedagogy is learnt and experienced simultaneously by the trainees, inherently increasing the belief in their ability to engage in inclusive practices.

iii. Modelling of inclusive education practices by peers is considered to be an important part of the training environment as trainees are motivated by peers to adopt inclusive practices. Teachers reported that, “peers have a strong influence and [act as a] motivational force on one another” (Teacher #5), and that such modelling “encourages continued implementation by trainee as a learned behaviour” (Teacher #1). Modelling by peers also serves as “reinforcement of theory” (Teacher #4) in the inclusive education training environment.

Themes supporting the importance of instructional scaffolding

i. Instructional scaffolding provided by teacher educators in the training environment is considered invaluable to meaningful learning and the mastery of inclusive practices. It was reported that instructional scaffolding allows trainees to, “experience positive outcomes with few errors” (Teacher #1). It was also stated that scaffolding allows for, “student[s] to learn at their own pace/capability” (Teacher #4) and plays a proactive role in teacher education because “...in its absence, trainees may be overwhelmed by tasks” (Teacher #5).

ii. Instructional scaffolding can allow trainees to develop new knowledge and skills incrementally while experiencing success. For example, one teacher explained that for trainees instructional scaffolding helps to “[build] confidence [and are] . . . then more likely to continue to implement positive... strategies” (Teacher #1). Hence, trainees develop favourable beliefs in their capabilities to implement inclusive practices. It was also noted that, “[as trainees] progressively experience
success trainees will understand and practice moving from simple to complex in their teaching” (Teacher #5).

**Themes supporting the importance of physical resources**

i. Physical resources can allow for the acquisition and assimilation of inclusive education content by trainees. Teachers were of the opinion that resources are “…important to the development of understanding of inclusive education concepts, especially difficult concepts” (Teacher #5) and are, “very essential to meet the diversity of students [trainees] in the class who may be visual, auditory, ‘hands on’ etc. Resources provide a wealth of stimuli” (Teacher #3).

ii. Physical resources are considered to be necessary for the implementation of inclusive education practices by trainees. It was stated that, “the physical resources help to reduce hindrances to implementing inclusive education” (Teacher #7) and provide, “the tools to develop [inclusive] competencies” (Teacher #6) thereby facilitating “hands on experience[s] . . .” (Teacher #4) when in training.

**Discussion**

The research study provided evidence to facilitate a paradigm shift towards the promotion of an inclusive education philosophy within pre-service teacher training programmes as well as corroborate the usefulness of the PERTT model’s tri-systemic reciprocal network in facilitating the integration of inclusive education in teacher training in Barbados. According to the PERTT model self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation are interrelated constructs and represent the core psychological constituents of the emerging reflective teacher. As applied to inclusive education self-awareness refers to the understanding of one’s unique abilities, values, attitudes and desires (Day, 2000; George, 2003; London, 2001) as a personal inclusive education teaching philosophy develops. Self-efficacy is defined as, “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3) and, critical to the development of the trainee and future mastery of inclusive pedagogy. Self-regulation involves the ability to discern when and how to utilise inclusive strategies within the classroom. As revealed from the qualitative data, the perceived importance of cultivating self-awareness, self-efficacy and self-regulation in the development of the emerging inclusive reflective teacher was evident.
Self-Awareness
Teachers in this study reported the importance of reflection and peer-reinforcement in enhancing self-awareness. It was found that reflective practices assist in the development of an emerging inclusive teaching philosophy. This level of awareness on the part of teachers allows for a more accurate understanding of how they affect students’ learning (Richardson & Shupe, 2003), as the practice of teaching a diverse body of students requires teachers to recognize that they must constantly adapt to meet the needs of all students. Moreover, through peer reinforcement trainees develop favourable attitudes to use inclusive education strategies. Reinforcement therefore increases the perceived value and prioritisation of inclusive strategies. An acceptance and corresponding change towards an inclusive teaching philosophy is likely to motivate trainees to incorporate those pedagogical practices into their teaching in order to improve their students’ learning.

Self-Efficacy
Reflection and peer-reinforcement in addition to receiving guidance and support, modelling behaviours, and instructional scaffolding were found to be important to the development of enhancing self-efficacy. Teacher trainees are inexperienced and lack preparedness. Hence, by interacting with the wider pre-service teacher training peer group, trainees receive guidance and support as well as reinforcement which together increases their confidence in their inclusive pedagogical abilities. Moreover, through the instructional scaffolding and observational learning of instructors and peers, trainees gain opportunities for progressive mastery, assimilate appropriate knowledge and hence, enhance their inclusive education skill sets. Emerging reflective teachers, having garnered such experiences over time, are likely to develop favourable beliefs in their capabilities to implement inclusive practices.

Self-Regulation
With a developing personal awareness of the importance of adopting an inclusive teaching philosophy and an increase in one’s willingness to embrace such a teaching paradigm, the ability to regulate and discern how best to incorporate such strategies in daily teaching is also important. It was found that reinforcement and reflection again played an important role, as well as modelling behaviours in the pre-service teacher training environment. Teacher educators’ use of reinforcement acts to denote the value of the utilization of inclusive teaching strategies. Reflection allows for the modification and improvement of inclusive teaching strategies over
time. Having been trained within such an environment, trainees would be more likely to critically evaluate and ascertain the relevance of inclusive practices thereby building their pedagogical “toolbox”.

“The central premise of the PERTT model is that through increased self-awareness, self-efficacy, and self-regulation, teachers-in-training will enter the workforce better prepared to teach, manage and inspire students in a professional and competent way.” (Jules & Maynard, 2015, p.100). Hence, in order to move from a deficit model of special education, the application of principles of the PERTT model to inclusive education ensures the development of a robust inclusive teaching philosophy in pre-service teacher-trainees and thus should be considered an essential component of all future teacher training programmes. Pre-service teacher training will help build and establish a new lens through which prospective teachers see all students as exceptional: from the cognitively and physically challenged to the gifted. Hence, participation of students with exceptional needs in inclusive settings is based on the philosophy of equality, sharing, participation and the worth and dignity of individuals. This philosophy is based on the belief that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources.” (Biswal, 2015, p.500)

In conclusion, the PERTT model having been substantiated by empirical evidence would prove to be a valuable framework through which pre-service teacher training in inclusive education can be facilitated within the Caribbean.

References


PRACTICES AND ROUTINES IN SIWI LESSONS THAT DEVELOP READING PROFICIENCY FOR D/HH LEARNERS.

Paulson Skerrit

The average performance of Deaf and hard of hearing (D/hh) students on tests of reading comprehension is several grade equivalents below their high school hearing peers. This study explored how the reading-writing connection evident in instruction driven with a high fidelity to the principles of Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI) addresses the literacy challenges of D/hh learners. The video footage of SIWI lessons in two grade three classrooms were examined using a comingling of inductive and interpretive analysis and utilizing Spradley’s nine semantic relationships to determine the instructional and learner practices and routines that supported development of word recognition skills. The following instructional and learner practices and routines were identified: engaging students in cognitively demanding discourse that featured extended discourse and persistence in questioning; a high volume of repeated and wide reading; high volume of writing; multiple representation of words with an emphasis on fingerspelling; and attending to language input.

Research has shown that there is a connection between learning to read and learning to write (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Graham & Herbert, 2011; Shanahan, 1998; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). We also know that the ability to decode words is one of the components of reading and a predictor of reading comprehension (Zumeta, Compton, & Fuchs, 2012). This study was used to investigate the range of instructional and learner practices and routines of participants (teachers and students) engaged in Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI) lessons in an ongoing study on student achievement. The goal was to identify, in the context of the unique classroom settings involved in the study, those practices and routines specific to the application of the principles of SIWI that contributed to the development of word identification skills as one measure of reading proficiency.

Literature Review

Over 95% of D/hh learners are born to parents who are not deaf and the others are born in households where one or both parents and other relatives
may be Deaf and who may also have a fully developed form of natural signed communication (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004). This creates a situation where the Deaf child either (1) has limited access to the language spoken in the household, or (2) acquires sign language as their first language and must learn English as a second language (Smetana, Odelson, Burns, & Grisham, 2009). D/hh learners in any of those two scenarios bring to the literacy table several challenges that need to be addressed in the pathway taken to develop their literacy skills. Researchers identify language deprivation or language delays and world experiences that are not linked with the language used in the early learning environment of D/hh learners as the fundamental challenge (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014; Luckner, Sebald, Cooney, Young, & Muir, 2005; McAnally, Rose, & Quigley, 2007; Trezek, Wang, & Paul, 2011). Even when a D/hh child is born to Deaf parents and exposed very early to a fully developed language, they may be challenged with reading and writing if they have not developed the meta-linguistic awareness that American Sign Language (ASL) or their native sign language has a structure that is different from English and some unique grammatical properties that are modality specific (Wolbers, Graham, Dostal, & Bowers, 2014).

**Strategic Interactive Writing Instruction (SIWI)**

Instruction using SIWI is already benefitting D/hh students. Wolbers, Dostal, Graham, Cihak, Kilpatrick and Saulsburry (2015) demonstrated that D/hh students made gains and have the capacity for further growth in their discourse-level writing skills across recount, information report, and persuasive genres. Dostal, Bowers, Wolbers and Gabriel (2015) noted patterns (e.g., changes in initiative to engage in writing, purpose for writing, awareness of writing ability and independence as writers) that give evidence of development as writers. Students’ engagement in discourse typical of interaction in SIWI lessons builds metalinguistic awareness, and ASL and English linguistic competence (Dostal & Wolbers, 2014). This has the dual effect of promoting gains in both languages. Wolbers, Dostal, & Bowers (2011) reported that both low and high achieving students made significant gains in writing length, sentence complexity, and sentence awareness. Dostal (2011) demonstrated the “reciprocity of language learning” (p. vii) by documenting the gains in ASL expressive language on the part of D/hh students receiving SIWI. Those students in that study increased their mean length of utterances (MLU) and reduced the number of unintelligible utterances evident in their ASL expression. Wolbers (2010) investigated the role of explicit language instruction and rereading practices in the development of English writing
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fluency and writing independence of D/hh students and reported gains in both outcomes.

SIWI, far from being a strategy for teaching writing, is actually a framework that has several pedagogical pillars that guide writing instruction. The pillars or driving principles are listed and defined in Table 1. SIWI can be used to teach any genre of writing. It allows for incorporating strategies that have already proven successful in the tier three level of response to intervention (RTI) settings that emphasize differentiated instruction that meets the individual needs of struggling students (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 2012).

The Reading Writing Connection
Teaching reading and writing as a simultaneous approach has been grounded in research and fore-grounded in solid theoretical frameworks. The reading-writing connection fits within the transactional paradigm which holds that there exists a fluid relationship between the processes of reading and writing in which everything influences everything (Rosenblatt, 1988). Every transaction with text, as a reader or writer, draws on the linguistic-experiential reservoir of the individual. The theory calls for attention to the individual as a reader and writer and what they bring to the text, the expectations that they have and the choices that they make as they read or write. Each time the individual transacts with text in either the role of reader or writer, they apply, reorganize, revise or extend elements appropriated from their personal linguistic-experiential reservoir in a non-linear manner (Rosenblatt, 1988). This appropriation is accomplished by means of what Rosenblatt calls selective attention. Each time text is being read or written- even in the face of a blank page- the individual is transacting with the personal, social and cultural environment. This is done with an efferent and an aesthetic stance with the reader or writer either adopting more predominantly one or the other or doing so on a continuum (Rosenblatt, 2013). The efferent stance addresses the information being extracted or crafted into the text while the aesthetic stance targets the experience lived (i.e., feelings, associations, memories, image streams) as the text is read or written. To effectively adopt either or both stances requires a fusing of the thought processes of both a reader and a writer.
Table 1. Driving Principles of SIWI and Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>The instruction is strategic in the sense that students are explicitly taught to follow the processes of expert writers through the use of word or symbol procedural facilitators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive</td>
<td>SIWI is interactive in the sense that students and the teacher share ideas, build on each other’s contributions, and cooperatively determine writing actions. Through this process, the student externalizes his/her thoughts in a way that is accessible to his/her peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linguistic and Metalinguistic</td>
<td>Persons have two separate routes to develop ability in a second language—acquiring implicitly and learning explicitly. The implicit and explicit approaches of SIWI aid in developing linguistic competence and metalinguistic knowledge among d/hh students (Wolbers, Dostal, &amp; Bowers, 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balanced</td>
<td>While writing as a group, the teacher identifies balanced literacy objectives for his/her students that are slightly beyond what students can do independently. The teacher is cognizant to target a mixture of word-, sentence-, and discourse-level writing skills that will be emphasized during group guided writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided to Independent</td>
<td>When the teacher has the ability to step back and transfer control over the discourse-level objectives (e.g., text structure demands) to the students during guided writing, s/he will then move students into paired writing. The teacher will circulate the room to observe what students can do in a less-supported environment. If students exhibit good control over the objectives, the teacher then moves students into independent writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Scaffolds</td>
<td>Showing promise in supporting the learning of d/hh students (Fung, Chow, &amp; McBride-Chang, 2005), visual scaffolds offer another mode of accessing the knowledge of more-knowledgeable-others. In SIWI, students use visual scaffolds to recognize and apply new writing strategies or skills they are in the process of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic</td>
<td>During SIWI, the students and the teacher generate, revise, and publish pieces of text for a predetermined and authentic audience. Writing instruction and practice is always embedded within purposeful and meaningful writing activity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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As the writer creates a text, they engage in two kinds of authorial reading of the text—constantly re-reading to ensure it fits with their abstracted or explicitly acquired understanding of previously written text and that the words and meaning match the intent or purpose of writing (Rosenblatt, 2013). The writer also experiences the transaction a reader would have with the text by bringing to the text the expectations readers have (Rosenblatt; Shanahan, 1998). At times both kinds of authorial reading converge on the text. Conversely, the reader engages with text, doing so with the stance of a writer (Rosenblatt). The reader may activate the efferent process by means of selective attention and focus almost exclusively on the facts and their impersonal relevance, or by means of selective attention, they may activate the aesthetic process and alternatively hone in on the feelings, sensations, tensions, sights and sounds associated with the factual content of the text and any personal connections in their linguistic-experiential reservoir (Rosenblatt). Of course, the reader in adopting the writer’s stance may transact with the text on the efferent-aesthetic continuum mentioned earlier.

Proficient readers exhibit traits that writers keep to the forefront when they write and make decisions regarding their writing. They make connections to their lived experiences, adopt an alignment with the ideas, visualize, make predictions, ascertain the relevance of details, make inferences, consider implications, integrate information, form interpretations, monitor their understanding, revisit meaning, clarify understanding, analyze craft, self-question and reflect (Holt & Vacca, 1981). Each of these traits translate into cognitive and linguistic processing that take place as the reader and the writer meet at the text—figuratively speaking. This amounts to good readers thinking about writers and good writers thinking about readers when they transact with text (Holt & Vacca; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). The writer thinks of the reader, their interest, their needs and what would be appropriate as they send a message to an audience. “What is prediction for the reader must be foreshadowing for the writer. What is completion for the reader must be, on the writer’s part, meaningful and logical resolution” (Holt & Vacca, p. 940).

In the past theories of reading and writing presented these two processes as opposite sides of a literacy construct with reading as decoding and writing as encoding. However, a look at the neuropsychological factors, cognitive processes, knowledge variables, and product outcomes associated with reading-writing connections, suggest an alternative way to develop the skills of both reading and writing. This alternative approach is supported by the transactional theory of reading and writing (Rosenblatt, 1988, 2013) and other theoretical perspectives including the rhetorical relations view of reading-writing connections (Tierney & Shanahan,
1991), the functional view of reading-writing connections (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000) and the shared knowledge view of reading-writing connections (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000). These theoretical underpinnings direct attention to the reciprocal nature of the reading-writing connection. Instruction that takes advantage of the reading-writing connection and increased volume in the opportunities for reading and writing will yield mutually supportive benefits in the development of reading and writing skills.

**Research Method**

**Context for the Present Study**

There were two previous efficacy studies that provide context for the current study. In the first efficacy study with students in grades six to eight, findings on writing, language and word identification outcomes were reported (Wolbers, 2007, 2008, 2010). It was a quasi-experimental study involving the genre of information report writing occurring in matched treatment and comparison conditions (N=33 students). Approximately two and one-half hours of SIWI were provided to students in the experimental group each week for eight weeks by a teacher who scored 95% on fidelity of implementation of SIWI. The students in the comparison group were matched in the amount of instructional time each week, but, followed a structured language curriculum with some opportunity to write for real purposes supported by one-on-one conferencing with the teacher. Primary trait rubrics for genre-related features, contextual language and conventions were used by Wolbers to score the pre- and post-writing samples of information and narrative writing (untaught) that were collected from students. The scoring of 15% of the papers involved a second rater with inter-rater reliability above 0.9. Using the Slosson Oral Reading Test-Revised (SORT-R; Slosson & Nicholson, 1990), measurement of pre- and post-word identification abilities was obtained.

In the above efficacy study necessary univariate analysis followed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) of the data. Significant gains with effect sizes that spanned large to very large (Cohen’s d=1.27 to 2.65) were demonstrated by the treatment group on genre-related features of information report writing as well as in the area of contextual language and conventions. While the genre of narrative writing was not the focus of instruction, the students in the experimental group exhibited significantly greater gains (d=2.207) and there was also appreciable growth in their writing fluency as measured by length (d=1.53). The measurement of word identification ability (d=0.39) likewise indicated statistical significance.
Over the eight-week period of the intervention study the students in the experimental group demonstrated improvements of 0.45 grade levels which contrasted with the absence of gains in word identification in the comparison group.

More recently, a second efficacy study came out of an intervention with students in grades three to five (Wolbers, Dostal, & Graham, 2012). This quasi-experimental study occurred in the second half of a Year II project that was part of a 3-year Institute of Education Sciences-funded project to develop SIWI for use with D/hh students in grades 3-5 to improve writing and language outcomes. The design of this project had 63 students participating in instruction by nine teachers in six schools across treatment and business-as-usual comparison groups. The fidelity to SIWI instruction rating for the teachers ranged from 60.4%-89%. After nine weeks of treatment, samples were collected for recount and persuasive writing. The SORT-R was used to assess students’ word identification abilities. The writing samples were scored using primary traits rubrics that were tied to the respective genres: recount writing- orientation, events and organization, and persuasive writing- opinion, reasons and organization. The Structural Analysis of Written Language (SAWL) was also used to assess the writing samples for word efficiency ratio (WER) at three different levels, words per T-unit, and percentage of complete sentences. Gains in the WER ratios and percentage of completed units would be a reflection of greater linguistic accuracy, and improvements in linguistic complexity would be indicated by increases in the number of words per T-unit (Hunt, 1965).

Multilevel regression analysis of the recount and persuasive writing samples revealed statistically significant results on all primary traits except recount orientation with effect sizes ranging from 0.53 to 2.01 (Hedges’ g). Similar multilevel analysis revealed statistical significance for SAWL language outcomes on the recount writing samples (effects from 0.46 to 1.20) and substantial outcomes with the persuasive writing samples (0.38 to 1.06) corroborating the success of the treatment. The measure of word identification abilities between the treatment and the comparison groups (effect size = 0.11) on the SORT-R was non-significant. However, the tremendous variation in the word identification abilities of students with different teachers in the study and the range in scores for teachers’ fidelity to SIWI (60.4%-89%) begged for a follow up study of the practices and routines that occur during co-construction of text.
The Current Study

The recently mentioned need for a follow up study was the focus of the current study. The focus of this study was on the achievement in reading and writing of D/hh students in the elementary grades and the instructional and learner practices and routines in lessons of teachers who use SIWI to teach writing. The intervention studies mentioned above revealed trends in the data that suggest a link between the practices and routines associated with the use of SIWI as an instructional framework for teaching writing and the gains students made in both their writing and word identification abilities. Since the skill of word identification has been considered a predictor of reading comprehension (Zumeta, Compton, & Fuchs, 2012), there was concern in this study with those practices and routines in SIWI writing lessons which were strong contributors to gains in the development of competencies related to word identification. The identification of these instructional and learner practices and routines, could be foregrounded in terms of instructional fidelity for teachers using SIWI with the goal of developing reading and writing skills as a simultaneous approach.

Participants. The participants for this multiple-study case comprised of two grade three classes from the treatment group in the second year (Year II) of the above-mentioned 3-year Institute of Education Sciences-funded project to develop SIWI for use with D/hh students in grades 3-5 to improve writing and language outcomes. The teachers were trained to deliver writing instruction using the principles of SIWI by means of SIWI professional development workshops led by the program developer and several mentor teachers who have been using SIWI for many years. The SIWI observation and fidelity instrument was used to gather data through observation of teacher and student interactions during classroom instruction and interviews with the teachers.

Data collection. Classroom lessons throughout the year were recorded using a video camera that captured both teacher and students’ interactions. Teachers were interviewed at the end of Year II and the students were interviewed both prior to and after the instructional period in Year II. Assessment data used to select the two grade three classes that made gains in writing, language accuracy and complexity, ASL sign receptive skills and word identification comprised the following: discourse level writing skills in recount and persuasive writing assessed using primary traits rubrics; written language for accuracy and language complexity measured by the Structured Analysis of Written Language (SAWL) (White, 2007), students’ emerging receptive knowledge of ASL phrases and sentences assessed using the ASL Receptive Skills Assessment (ASL-RSA) (Enns, Zimmer, Boudreault, Rabu, & Broszeit, 2013), and a measure of word

**Data analysis.** A comingling of an inductive and interpretive model of data analysis was used to analyse the data. Nodes were created for each unit of analysis or case (the two individual classrooms) and all data relevant to each case were coded in those nodes. The specifics regarding the context for each case (e.g., language or communication mode and other relevant contextual details) were recorded as attributes of each case node. Initial viewing of the video and interview data was done to establish frames of analysis that framed the data into analysable parts.

The next step into the process of data analysis was identifying the domain categories that emerged around nine semantic relationships (Spradley, 1979). The nine semantic relationships through which the domains were inductively created were: strict inclusion (X is a kind of Y); spatial (X is a place in Y); cause-effect (X is a result of Y); rationale (X is a reason for doing Y); location for action (X is a place for doing Y); function (X is used for Y); means-end (X is a way to do Y); sequence (X is a step in Y); and attribution (X is a characteristic of Y). The nature of the semantic relationships was documented in memos linked to the domain category nodes (coding for the cover term). The included terms were the sub-codes that coded for member concepts that are related to the domain categories.

The comingling of the inductive and interpretive model of data analysis resulted in detailed memos linked to nodes and sub-nodes that recorded the impressions that were formed. This step in the analysis also added to the complexity, richness and depth of the data through a search for patterns across domains. The products of the analysis then became the data for further analysis that identified relationships among the relationships- those themes that encapsulated what it all meant. As the researcher looked across domains, a careful search for similarities and differences were made. A final coding of the memos and re-examination of the data revealed instances where interpretations were supported or challenged. While the interpretive model called for a review of the interpretations with the participants, an adaptation of this step involved peer debriefing with the developer of the SIWI model and a monitor who visited the case sites and observed several of the lessons. A draft summary that communicated the interpretations was prepared and this was used as the source for the report on the findings of the study.
Results

Instructional Practices and Routines That Develop Skills in Reading

Engagement in cognitively demanding classroom discourse. The teachers in both the total communication (TC) and the bilingual classrooms engaged in cognitively demanding classroom discourse throughout the lessons. Students were required to think through their responses. The teachers also extended the discourse beyond the here and now to make connections to their personal experiences and those of the students. They connected to world knowledge that was both curriculum related and that which constituted general knowledge. These extended discourses were appropriate for the small group of students that is consistent with D/hh classes as it allowed for active involvement by many if not all of the students. A key feature of the classroom discourse was persistence in questioning. Particularly, in the bilingual setting, the teacher used many more wh-questions, she repeated her questions at least three or four times before requiring a response and some of her question scripts were intended specifically to develop the back-translation skills of the students.

Involvement in a high volume of reading and writing. Many opportunities were seized upon for the teacher to read and write in high volumes. In the bilingual setting, the teacher read for the students from Internet sources and their class notebook. She was consistent in reading using storysigning or storyreading with an emphasis on back-translating to ASL. Both teachers read from several model texts that illustrated the features of each genre of writing that they were working on. For each genre, they worked on several writing projects and this was instrumental in increasing the opportunities for the students to observe the teacher writing English words. The more they were exposed to words when written by the teachers, increased the opportunities for encoding, storage and retrieval.

Representing text in multiple ways. The teachers represented the language of text in various ways in the classroom. They spoke the words, signed the words, mouthed the words, wrote the words, acted out the words, fingerspelled the words using careful and subsequent rapid fingerspelling, drew the word’s meaning and labelled the drawings. They made frequent references to the varied representations either in sequence in a kind of chaining or sandwiching effect or by referring back at later times during the discourse.

Attending to language. Teachers were consistent in calling the attention of students throughout the lesson. They used the ASL sign
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READY! that was always accompanied by the raised brow and did not proceed until everyone was ready to attend. The Deaf teacher employed additional task-orienting signals such as raising the hand and waiting or performing the signed form of HEY-YOU-THERE. There were times when getting the students’ attention required managing a lack of self-regulation and the Deaf teacher came up with a variety of new and interesting ways to manage the behavioural problems and get the students back on task.

Learner Practices and Routines That Develop Skills in Reading

Repeated and wide reading. Students were required to read either independently or at the teacher’s direction, from Internet and traditional text sources as part of the planning phase in preparation for expository writing. They read text written in the language zone—a space used to build meta-linguistic awareness and to revise and edit text toward closer approximations of written Standard English—as well as on the writing spaces dedicated to planning, organizing and writing English sentences. They read prior to editing English sentences and then each time a new chunk of edited and revised text was being reread, it was read from the beginning of the passage. In the bilingual class, their reading took on a different approach as it involved back translation as they moved from the English text back to signing ASL.

Frequent writing. In the bilingual classroom the students did most of the writing, both when planning, organizing and writing English sentences. They wrote on the board or on their individual writing sheets. Writing took place somewhat differently in the TC setting. While the teacher did most, if not all of the scribing, it was the students who actually generated all of the text. In the TC setting independent writing was done by another teacher in a different classroom.

Representing words in multiple ways. The students in the TC setting spoke and signed using SimCom. They fingerspelled very often either as an alternative to signing or to accompany a signed word. When they worked together without interacting with the teacher, they were observed signing and mouthing as well as fingerspelling. In the bilingual class, they were given more opportunities to write words, draw their meaning, and to act out the meaning of words. They too, mouthed and signed words and fingerspelled words either as an alternative to signing or in accompaniment.

SIWI and the Reading-Writing Connection

The SIWI instructional framework exemplifies instruction that fits within the paradigm of reading-writing connection. Many of the instructional and
learning practices and routines that were identified in this study as contributing to gains in word recognition have been identified as critical aspects of the reading-writing connection. Students engaged in authorial reading each time they read text in preparation to edit and revise and when they engaged in rereading the revised English sentences before continuing to write. The wide reading accomplished by means of the research writers did as they planned for a writing project, and when they read model text that exemplified genre related features, exposed students to sentence structures, contextual language and a wide vocabulary that was used to enrich their writing and reduced the struggle students faced as they tried to express their thoughts down on paper.

Moreover, the extended dialogue that made connections to students and teachers’ personal experiences and to their world knowledge, allowed for students to practice fluidly moving between an efferent and an aesthetic stance when transacting with the text. Students also had the opportunity to write about information they had read. While preparing for expository writing in both settings, the students wrote to real audiences about curriculum related material, and this preparation involved doing research that required reading from a variety of sources. This pattern was in sync with the functional view of the reading-writing connection that supports writing to learn in the content areas. Indeed, SIWI is to be regarded as a model instructional approach situated in the reading-writing connection paradigm.

**Significance**

SIWI is a framework of writing instruction that has resulted in gains in student achievement with writing across genres, written and signed expressive language skills and motivation as writers. The insight gained from this study provided enlightenment on ways that instructional and learner practices and routines can be capitalized on to promote gains in reading development as a simultaneous approach to developing proficiency in writing skills. This study added to the body of knowledge regarding the connection between learning to read and learning to write (Fitzgerald & Shanahan, 2000; Graham & Herbert, 2011; Shanahan, 1998; Tierney & Shanahan, 1991). This study also had several implications for teachers of the D/hh that included the following: incorporating into the instructional skill set and learning activities, those practices and routines which were not yet an explicit part of SIWI; developing new training routines in the SIWI professional development curriculum; foregrounding those instructional routines in the SIWI fidelity instrument; and possibly infusing into the framework, principles that more explicitly address the
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read-write connection on both the level of instructional practice and learner skill development.

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TEACHERS’ VIEWS OF THE LEARNING POTENTIAL OF STUDENTS FROM LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLDS:
Challenges of Inclusion

Benignus Bitu, Dyann Barras, Stephen Geofroy, Shahiba Ali,
Samuel Lochan, Lennox McLeod, Lystra Stephens-James & Antoinette Valentine Lewis

One key determinant of inclusion regarding children from low-income households is belief in their learning potential. Teacher educators of the in-service post-graduate Diploma in Education programme are charged with helping teacher-participants interrogate and modify negative views they may hold of students from such backgrounds. Some views may constitute an approach inimical to the empowerment of children. While views of teacher-participants on the learning potential of children from low-income households are discussed early in the programme, there is need for systematic analysis of such views. In so doing, insights gained can guide the approach of teacher educators in their quest for sensitizing teacher-participants as to appropriate responses in educating children from low-income households. Using a qualitative case-study approach, the views of nine teacher-participants were obtained through semi-structured focus group interviews that were analysed thematically using the grounded theory approach. Findings revealed that although teacher-participants expressed views acknowledging the challenging life contexts of students from low-income households, they were also keenly aware of the empowering potential of positive relationships in the educational endeavour. Practical asset-based strategies for teachers and administrators were advanced in response to issues confronting students from low-income households. Recommendations suggested ways in which teacher education could be enhanced.

Background

Each year the School of Education at the St Augustine campus of the University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, welcomes a cohort of secondary school teachers of various disciplinary specialties for an initial in-service professional development programme of nine months’ duration. This research was carried out with nine teachers of the 2016-2017 cohort of Social Sciences who teach History, Geography, Social Studies and Business Studies. The authors of this research are the teacher educators
(lecturers) who facilitate the professional development of the Social Sciences cohort.

To develop teachers in their personal and professional capacities the programme comprises the courses: Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations), The Reflective Practitioner, Pedagogy as Process and Practicum. The Foundations course fosters discussion on and analysis of various educational issues related to the areas of Language, Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, and Health and Family Life Education (HFLE). Secondly, The Reflective Practitioner constitutes an action research project geared to foster reflection and improvement on actual practice in the classroom. Pedagogy as Process concerns the strategies and issues of the teaching and learning of the Social Sciences and the Practicum consists of critical engagement of teachers and teacher educators in the context of actual lessons conducted during the course of the year (The University of the West Indies, Faculty of Humanities and Education, 2016).

Rationale for the Research

In an initial teacher-preparation programme, understanding the views teacher-participants hold, affords teacher educators scope for advancing the professional practice of teacher-participants by engaging directly with existing ideas in order to correct or to build on them. Since in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T), teachers encounter in schools many children from low-income households, teacher expectations as to the learning potential of such children are of considerable interest as these may influence student achievement (Wilson & Conyers, 2013).

Teacher-participants’ views are thus solicited and discussed early in the programme in order to facilitate a critical engagement of ideas rooted in teacher experience. While teacher-participants provide feedback by way of in-class group presentations, the researchers felt the need to engage in a more deliberate systematic documentation and analysis of teacher-participants’ views. Such an investigation, we felt, could sharpen our approach as teacher-educators in the effort to prepare teachers professionally and to sensitize them to the learning needs of children from low-income households.

The purpose of this study is to investigate teachers’ views of children from low-income households as to students’ learning potential as expressed by teachers on an initial in-service professional development programme at The University of the West Indies, Trinidad and Tobago, 2016-2017. This investigation aims, not only to elucidate and interrogate
*Teachers’ Views of the Learning Potential of Students From Low-Income Households*

dominant features of teacher constructs, but to discuss the findings in the light of inclusive education.

Expected outcomes include the results of analysis incorporating teachers’ views of students from low-income households as to students’ learning and teachers’ responses to issues confronting these students. Results would guide our approach to teacher education and would add to the literature on inclusive education and on teacher professional development.

**Literature Review**

Inclusion in education “is seen as a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 13).

From discourse on the education of special-needs children, namely those “with disabilities, and…who experience difficulties in learning” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 9), concerns were raised as to the practice of separating them from those in mainstream schooling. Eventually the stage of separate or segregated schooling (that often served only a few of those deemed “special”) gave way to the praxis of integration or mainstreaming that fell short due to a lack of adjustments to school organisation, curriculum and pedagogy. Consequently, the concept of inclusive education emerged to view student diversity in a positive way rather than a setback to learning, thus “seeing individual differences not as problems to be fixed, but as opportunities for enriching learning” (p. 9). Education that is inclusive thus entails the “recognition of the need to work towards ‘schools for all’ - institutions which include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs.” (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii).

According to UNESCO (2005), in this on-going process, policy and practice emerged from key principles of inclusion. Firstly, that not only is diversity to be seen in an affirmative manner but response to diversity is an ongoing process with differences appropriated as providing opportunities for learning. Secondly, there is the idea that problem solving is also essential, as it involves the removal of barriers to quality learning. Thirdly, inclusive is conceptualized as involving all learners requiring the fostering of creative ways to facilitate their full development for the achievement of curriculum goals and not only with the performance at examinations. Fourthly, while aiming for all round development, inclusive education pays particular attention to those who may be most at risk of “marginalization, exclusion or underachievement” (p. 16). Finally,
inclusion is not simply a rearrangement of educational practices but anchored in educational philosophy that espouses the development of the individual as a central aim. The enhancement of a person’s potential came to be seen as an entitlement due to every human being. Such a right encompasses more than simply the placement of a child in a school.

Inclusive education holds as a core feature that education is a human right to be afforded to all children. Education as a right achieved worldwide priority in recent decades and has also been expressed in many important documents at the level of the United Nations. The following are key documents pertaining to inclusive education: Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989); Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994); Dakar Framework for Action: Education for All (UNESCO, 2000); Education for All: Is the World on Track? (UNESCO, 2000); and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006).

While targets for inclusion focus on gender, ethnicity and those challenged physically and mentally, concern also includes people from low-income households. In general, attention to the poor and marginalized has become a hallmark of modern democratic societies. Given sharpened awareness of the need to develop and sustain a knowledge-based society, the UK and the USA have attempted to ameliorate the conditions of those from low-income households through policy measures in health, social welfare, housing and educational opportunity (Douglas, 1964; Halsey, Floud & Anderson, 1961; Lupton, 2005; UK Department for Education, 2015; US Department of Education, 2002; US Department of Education, 2009).

In the Caribbean, the colonial heritage has left us a unique paradigm of inequality with patterns of social and economic stratification based on ethnicity and wealth. After achieving independence, great hopes were placed on education as the means of empowering citizens of T&T to leave behind the constraining, elitist and oppressive legacy inherited from the colonial past (Deosaran, 2016). Governments of T&T invested heavily in the development of its people by way of facilitating greater access to educational opportunities by a wider clientele than were previously afforded. Measures adopted included expanding school places and supporting children from poor backgrounds through the provision of free school books, free transport and free school meals.

With the goal of developing the learning potential of students through schooling, official T&T government policy has held firm to the position “that every child has an inherent right to an education which will enhance the development of the maximum capability regardless of gender, ethnicity, economic, social or religious background” (Trinidad and
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Tobago, National Task Force on Education, 1993, pp. xvii). Today, the issue of inequality of educational opportunity for low income households is still a concern the world over (UNDP, 2011), regionally (UNESCO, 2015) and in Trinidad and Tobago.

According to the T&T Central Statistical Office (CSO), the designation of households with low income refers to those whose combined yearly income falls within the “US$4468 - 5000” bracket, with increasing gradation bands to that of high income designated as within “US$ 7001 - 7500” (Trinidad & Tobago, CSO, 2012, p. 9). Reports on two surveys carried out by Kairi Consultants (Johnson, 2016) indicate that the percentage of those in the population living in poverty has risen from around 16 percent in 2005 to 24.5 percent in 2014 and that 300,000 persons were living in poverty. With this growth in the incidence of poverty in a stratified society, the challenge to promote a key element of inclusion - equity of educational opportunity- increases with implications for non-discrimination and justice in society (UNESCO, 2009).

Within T&T, the education system is also stratified as part of our colonial legacy (Campbell, 1992; De Lisle, 2012). Historically, there have been two main categories of schools, namely the traditional denominational (government-assisted) and government; the former took on the character of “highly valued” prestigious schools and the latter consequently less valued and in some cases “demonized” (De Lisle, Keller, Jules & Smith, 2009, p. 147). A general characteristic of this system is that the denominational secondary schools have in attendance the better academically performing students who mainly come from middle and high-income households, while many from low-income households attend the government schools and are, by and large, academically outperformed by the former (Deosaran, 2016; Jules, 1994; Ryan, Rampersad, Bernard, Mohammed & Thorpe, 2013). Between 2008 and 2012 when considering the number of students gaining five or more passes at the CSEC level, the denominational schools surpassed the government schools by “41% in 2008, 40% in 2009, 44% in 2010, 44% in 2011 and 45% in 2012” (Deosaran, 2016, p. 211).

An official report commissioned by the Government of T&T on Youth and Crime in 2013 (also referred to as The Ryan report) suggested that “those who do not succeed in gaining admission to those ‘prestige’ schools generally have to cope with the psychological trauma of a deep sense of failure, which some never overcome” (Ryan et al., 2013, p. 56). The narrowing of chances toward obtaining a quality education can leave students in unfortunate circumstances. The Ryan report makes connections between the conditions of poverty, crime and educational opportunity indicating that “broken and dysfunctional families, juvenile
delinquency, peer rejection, failure or disruptive behaviour at school, gang membership and incarceration” (pp. 10-11) seem to thrive in the same environment.

Another study albeit in a different context elucidates the link between poverty and habitual school truancy and its relevance to students’ learning potential. In this respect Balfanz and Byrnes (2012) indicate that:

Chronic absenteeism is most prevalent among low-income students, and it is low-income students who benefit the most from being in school every day... the available data indicate that while chronic absenteeism is deeply detrimental to educational success, just missing more than a week of school can have consequences. (pp. 6-7)

Given the plurality of terms in the literature that are used for classifying schools in T&T, the authors of this study follow De Lisle, Keller, Jules and Smith (2009, p. 147) in their use of the term “highly valued” for those schools generally perceived by stakeholders as those more desirable for children to attend. This designation is in keeping with the aim of the research that investigates teachers’ views of students and thus is more fitting as it incorporates the aspect of the affective.

The existence of “highly valued” schools and thus those “less valued”, serves to institutionalise the issue of inequality. While the challenge of attending to the learning needs of students from low-income families confronts all schools, since the former schools attract the better-off financially, issues concerning children of the poor are more intense in the schools deemed of lesser value; significantly, the lesser-valued schools have the bigger task in this respect.

Links between social inequality and educational inequality can be explored in three main strands of the sociology of education and clarify important perspectives by which students from lower-income households are viewed. Firstly, functionalists explain the causes of inequality as being due to the malfunctioning of the agencies of socialization such as the home, community group or school (Douglas, 1964). In an approach called deficit thinking children from poor communities and the communities from which they come were viewed as deficient (Sugarman, 1970). The Coleman studies (Coleman et al., 1966) suggested that home factors contributed to the underperformance of working class children. In addition, Bernstein (1961) suggested a linguistic deprivation of working class children since their use of a restricted code compared to the elaborate code of the middle classes, limited their capacity for abstract thought. Interventions therefore had to correct deficits in the home, the community as well as in the children as they entered the school system.
In critique of this deficit view, Valencia (2010) claims that “many behavioural and social scientists hold the deficit thinking model in disrepute – arguing that it ignores the role of systemic factors in creating school failure” (p. 6). Keefer (2012) also critiques the deficit approach. Citing the work of Gorski (2008) and Ladson-Billings (2006), Keefer identifies elements of the “pathology” (p. 38) with which working-class children are accused and renders such an approach as overly biased, negative and unfair. This pathology suggests that the poor are lazy, do not care about the education of their children, are linguistically different and are abusers of drugs and alcohol.

The second strand of theory is Marxist in orientation and represents a conflict perspective to the genesis of social inequality (Feinberg & Soltis, 2004). Fundamental to this theory is the work of Bowles and Gintis (1976) who advance a deterministic outlook regarding the hidden curriculum of the school as operating to shape different social classes differently. The hidden curriculum promotes acceptance of hierarchy, a subservient workforce, fragmented views of the world and motivation by external rewards. They propose that social status is the product of the social structure of the society and schools simply promote the social inequalities that exist in the wider society as the class structure reproduces itself by preparing the different classes for their respective roles in the economy. Students are viewed as cogs in a wheel and have little choice but to “toe the line”. The solution to the problem of inequality in this paradigm requires radical social transformation.

In contrast to the crude determinism of Bowles and Gintis (1976), other scholars (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Giroux, 1983; Willis, 1977) leave more room for agency. The latter see schools as sites of contestation where teachers and students exercise agency and where there is room to resist the hegemony of class structure. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) additionally offer a cultural-capital theory whereby the dominant groups in the society impose their culture through schools constituting a challenge to working class children, thus “aiding and abetting the reproduction of social inequality and social exclusion” (Tzanakis, 2011, p. 76). Teachers are seen as complicit in this process of cultural reproduction.

While Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) recognize and affirm the cultural capital of lower-income families, Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) find both the cultural capital and material circumstances as important. While the language, education and values of the family are important, the ability to access books, health or extra supports is also critical and so both material and cultural factors work together to shape educational opportunity. Freire (1971; 2004) also recognizes the role of agency in this second strand and insists that the hegemony of class can be resisted by
pedagogy designed to help people win their freedom through a critical-thinking process called conscientization.

The third strand, in postmodernist paradigm, includes symbolic interactionism (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012) and differs from the functionalist and conflict perspectives as it moves further away from determinism and advances even a greater degree of agency to teachers and students in the context of schools than that proposed even by the second strand. Interactionist authors take account of the subjective states of individuals and the meanings they attach to the unfolding events in their lives (Becker, 1977; Cicourel & Kitsuse, 1971; Rist, 1970).

The exploration of teachers’ views as a significant research endeavour connects with the interactionists who give primacy to subjective meanings whereby, in short, “people behave based on what they believe” (Crossman, 2017, para. 2). A working assumption is that teachers actualize their agency related to the perceptions of reality that they deem meaningful. For schools to be effective instruments of empowerment, teachers’ views matter: “beliefs, practices and attitudes...are closely linked to teachers’ strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life...shape students’ learning environment and influence student motivation and achievement” (OECD, 2009, p. 89).

A useful concept in this regard is that of self-efficacy which is defined as the “beliefs in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p.3). In particular, teacher efficacy can be understood as “teachers’ belief or conviction that they can influence how well students learn, even those who may be difficult or unmotivated” (Guskey & Passaro, 1994, p.628). The concept of teacher efficacy therefore includes the belief not only that the teacher is capable of empowering but also that the potential of the learner can be enhanced. Wilson and Conyers (2013) assert that among the key elements that “enable students…to achieve their potential” (p.53), the positive expectation of adults (parents, teachers and other caring people) as to a child’s learning potential is critical. Teacher efficacy is not enough, however, but achieving learning goals also requires an openness on the part of the student to engage in the learning process (Bradshaw, 2010).

A study exploring the connection between teachers’ expectations and their sense of responsibility for the learning of students from poor backgrounds proved instructive (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004). Findings indicated that teachers had lower levels of expectations and consequently less acceptance of responsibility. The low level of expectations generated by impressions conveyed by the wider society became embedded in the organizational habitus of the school.
Teachers’ Views of the Learning Potential of Students From Low-Income Households

Low expectations of the possibilities for student learning confirmed the self-fulfilling prophecy (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992) which teachers operationalised in their classrooms. Positively, the study also revealed that where school leaders facilitated teacher reflection on practice, progress was made in tackling negative approaches by teachers toward students from low-income households.

While not discounting the importance of positive influence of teacher expectations for student achievement nor the occurrence of the Pygmalion effect (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992), Chang (2011) asserts “it is not always the case that ‘you get what you expect’” (p. 200). Chang indicates that other factors are also needed for promoting student learning. Citing findings of a case study, he points out that misplaced beliefs about students (such as those pertaining to student autonomy) and inappropriate approaches to student learning and assessment can have deleterious effects on student outcomes.

The enhancement of learning potential not only entails belief in a child’s ability to learn but requires also the embodiment of appropriate teaching practices. Together with belief in their students’ capability, teachers “must act on that belief by creating a classroom environment that fosters potential that helps each student grow” (Wilson & Conyers, 2013, pp. 55-56).

In an educational setting, enhancing opportunities for learning also involve an enabling learning context. Wilson and Conyers (2013) thus define student potential as “the capacity for acquiring the knowledge and skills to achieve to a higher level of performance in any domain given the proper conditions for success [that] include effective instruction and support in a positive learning environment” (p. 53).

For achieving a positive learning environment, the affective element in teacher-student engagement seems critical. In a study carried out on teachers who themselves emerged from low-income households, the ability to connect (to empathise) with their students from similar backgrounds made a positive difference (Liggins, 2014). Teachers in that study believed that their backgrounds made them better equipped to teach students from low-income families “because they had personally been ‘in the same shoes’ as their students and had been successful themselves” (p. 100).

In addition, given the role that culture plays in students’ success at school (Bourdieu, 1973) and because they identified closely with the challenges that a culture of poverty (Payne, 2009) may pose for students, teachers in that study (Liggins, 2014) felt that they were sensitized to their students’ world and equipped to assist in overcoming obstacles and
gaining student trust in their efforts to promote the learning potential of their students.

Findings from research linking social class and teacher understandings of students’ potential for achievement conducted in South Florida (Keefer, 2012), highlighted emotional support as the critical factor for students’ personal success. In practice, this entailed the provision of an emotionally safe learning environment, life skills and recognition of the positive elements of students’ backgrounds. The creation of such conducive learning settings cannot but engage and draw upon a teacher’s emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). There is a place here for the employment of differentiated learning strategies where students feel respected in their particular learning styles and where learning activities are crafted to connect with the actual needs of individual students (Tomlinson, 2014).

Educational administrators also play an important role in raising the performance of children from low-income families in less-valued schools. In a survey of several studies, Crawford-Patterson (2008) identifies seven common characteristics of successful leadership, namely, a good principal is “a strong educational leader” with “a focus on clear standards for improvement of results”, encourages “teamwork”, ensures that “teachers are... committed to help all students achieve”, sets “high expectations... for all students”, encourages “collaboration... among faculty and staff” and engages families to “reinforce classroom learning at home” (p. 11).

Attention to beliefs and actions to facilitate conducive learning contexts can enhance the learning potential of students toward the attainment of “flow” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.71). Flow refers to a state of learning fulfilment and joy characteristic of optimal learning experiences. For the attainment of flow, parents need to believe in a student’s potential and provide challenging opportunities toward growth. Csikszentmihalyi states that “almost all kids who are in flow frequently, their parents have very high expectations of them and they trust that they can do that. And they give them the opportunities” (edutopia, 2011).

The Funds of Knowledge (FOK) approach advances a corrective to the deficit view of students indicating that “missing from such a framework is the understanding that students, families, and communities are comprised not only of struggles, but also of strengths” (Sugarman, 2010, p. 97). The FOK paradigm, which has anthropological roots, adopts an “asset-based” understanding of marginalized groups (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005; Kinney, 2015) wherein the cultural knowledge of these groups become incorporated into culturally relevant curricula with implications for pedagogy (Rodriguez, 2013).

Gonzalez, Moll and Amanti (2005) and Messing (2005) confirmed from their studies, that pre-service students who were engaged in
ethnographic research in poor communities in which they had to conduct their teaching, experienced shifts in their assumptions about the children, their parents and the communities in which they lived. The outlook of the teachers was transformed from deficit model thinking to an asset-based one that could generate communication and a positive exchange of ideas, talents and assets between the home and school environment.

**Implications for Teacher Education**

The ability to challenge popular pathologies, deficit theorizing and dominant discourses about low income and marginalized groups is required within a paradigm of teacher education which promotes reflection and the development of teacher identity. Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop (2004) recognize that the evolution of identity rests on the concept of self, the sets of roles and functions the teacher is called upon to execute and the set of images and expectations of what a teacher should be that is imposed by the wider society.

The research on FOK by Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, (2005) and Messing (2005) represents a new hopeful departure in the way teacher education programmes can be transformed wherein action research is employed to allow teachers to reflect on their beliefs, practices and their very identity, as they learn about the real lives of poor and marginalized students. Paulo Freire’s (1970) contribution on reflection and conscientization is congruent in this respect with the FOK approach.

**Methodology**

The methodological approach for this study is that of a qualitative case study (Yin, 2009) in which the views of teachers in an in-service professional development programme were collated and examined using grounded theory analysis in coding and the generation of themes (Charmaz, 2006). While the entire cohort of 56 teacher-participants were invited to participate, only a total of nine eventually participated in two focus groups in which semi-structured interviews were used. Of the nine teachers, three (Kathy, Adele and Parvati) teach at highly-valued schools, with Kathy, Adele and Gail having grown up in middle-income households while the others were from low-income households. Table 1 displays bio data pertaining to the respondents in this study.
Table 1. Respondents’ Bio Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Type Teaching</th>
<th>Form Level Teaching</th>
<th>Years Teaching</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Background (Socio-economic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radha</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parvati</td>
<td>Highly valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shazaad</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gail</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adele</td>
<td>Highly valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geeta</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tessa</td>
<td>Less valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathy</td>
<td>Highly valued</td>
<td>Upper &amp; Lower</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Middle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During interviews, teacher-participants were asked explicitly to focus on students from low-income households and issues pertaining to these students’ learning. For example, one question from the interview protocol consisted of the question: “Can you describe any general features that you have come to associate with students of low-income households as to their learning ability?”

Findings were reprised and discussed in the light of ideas and previous research contained in the literature review.

Research questions were as follows:

RQ1: What are teacher-participants’ views of students from low-income households as to their learning potential?

RQ 2: How have teacher-participants responded to issues confronting students from low-income households as to their learning potential?
Rigour was established by way of continuous peer review, including feedback from a conference presentation, and subsequent refinement as an integral part of the research process. Data were reduced in collaborative fashion with the authors critiquing one another in the process of ascribing codes and themes. Discussion of findings in the light of the literature was carried out in the same manner.

In keeping with ethical principles, permission was gained from the nine teachers who participated, with measures to preserve anonymity, to use their verbal contributions for purposes of this research.

Discussion of Findings

Teacher-participants’ Views as to Students’ Learning Potential (RQ1)

Teacher-participants expressed various views relating to the learning potential of students from low-income households as relating to student school attendance, home environment, literacy and the expectations of educators.

**Student school attendance**

Absenteeism is viewed by the teacher-participants as a characteristic associated with students from low-income households that negatively affects their learning potential (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012). Absence from classes (including unpunctuality) is due to issues relating to meals, transportation, domestic responsibilities and financial need. School attrition (those who drop out of school prematurely) is also a matter of concern that teachers pointed out.

Gail, who teaches in a catchment area with many low-income households, shared that, “If there is no ‘box lunch’ [free lunch], they don't come.” Additionally, Adele refers to students whose academic performance tend [sic] to dwindle away because they cannot leave home in the dark so they have to leave home when it's early but at that time the traffic is at the maximum level so they reach to school after 9 or 10 o'clock in the morning.

Due to the demands of domestic responsibilities, Parvati gave an account of one of her students, who is frequently absent, and comes from a single parent family: “He has two younger siblings to babysit while his mum takes up another job and he is losing instruction.”

Another case of absenteeism centred on financial need as Gail recounts: “When he [student] came into form one, the father did not want to come and register him because he was working in Tobago. So, he spent a whole week or a month not being in school.”
Some students even drop out of school entirely. Shazaad shared that “they would come to school for the first few days of the term [then] you would see them working in some store.”

**Home environment**

In the teacher-participants’ views, student learning potential is affected by home conditions. Emotional support from parents, a culture of crime, a lack of respect for parents and teachers, value placed on education and a tendency to depend on others for financial support are some of the factors that teacher-participants view as influencing student learning potential.

In teacher-participants’ views, parental support was highlighted. Respondents opined that some parents did not render sufficient emotional support with regard to their children’s learning. Geeta who teaches in a school located in a district with many low-income households said that in households headed by “single parents, [or] grandparents, it was hard to get that parental support.” Elaborating on this point, Kathy claimed that “those [students] from wealthy backgrounds know their parents will come versus those from lower classes their parents will not even come to Parents’ Day. You see that link to parental support and their ability to do well in school.” The absence of parental support has been noted in the literature as to significantly contribute to the underperformance of working class children in schools (Coleman et al., 1966; Hanushek, 2016).

While Geeta and Kathy associate a lack of parental support with students of low-income households, Radha opines that such a perspective is not entirely consistent. Radha, who has experience of teaching in two separate and distinct catchment areas with many low-income households, lauded the positive parental support in her current situation: “when you have Parents’ Day all the parents show up as opposed to” her previous school. Radha’s current situation characterized by parental support provides a more conducive environment for the enhancement of Csikszentmihalyi’s optimisation of learning (edutopia, 2011).

According to Tessa, students of low-income households are sometimes involved in a culture of crime (Ryan et al., 2013) which contributes to an unstable learning environment with regular distractions:

> We have boys from gangs, that’s a big thing in our school. If two boys get in a fight “ah go bring mih father’s gun for you” and it has happened. We have a police station nearby and they’re always in our school.

Shazaad expressed a similar view to Tessa’s but in addition, mentioned the presence of drug trafficking: “marijuana is a huge business and there are rival gangs who sell out [sic] each other...and this happens in our school on a weekly basis.” Both Tessa and Shazaad attest to situations
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whereby involvement in the culture of crime contributes to regular disruptions to the learning environment. The occurrence of regular distractions can only augur negatively as to the development of the learning potential of students from low-income households and to building a culture of learning especially in the schools perceived of as less valued.

Some respondents were of the view that students of low-income households showed disrespect for parents and teachers. According to Shazaad, who teaches in a school less valued:

_You would be surprised that 12 and 13 years olds, boys especially, the parents have no control…the child is talking over the parent, talking louder, making excuses for their behaviour and the parent will be like “you see how he does talk to me?”_

Interestingly though, Parvati who teaches in a highly valued school did describe anti-social behaviours toward authority among some of the students from low-income households: “My school is in a different class altogether [sic] but there are some boys who give teachers real attitude and they don’t want to hear them and they [are] very disrespectful.” Disrespect toward parents and teachers as key agents of socialisation, interferes with the enhancement of a student’s learning potential as the very process of acquiring new learnings requires openness and humility toward those in authority capable of facilitating growth (Bradshaw, 2010).

Teacher-participants held views about the value that parents and students placed on education. Some students from low-income households were perceived as possessing a negative attitude towards education. Evidencing this view is Gail who shared that her students who were provided with Ministry of Education (MoE) school books came to class without them: “I don’t expect them to have text books. I ordered 20 and we now have three.”

On the other hand, another teacher-participant pointed out that some parents and students from low-income households did place high value on education, while others did not. Kathy said that:

_There are kids from the same background and they apply themselves. They have their battles at home and go on to win scholarships. I am not sure what is the difference between the kids that apply and the kids that sit back in a daze. I think it is the value placed on education._

While Kathy was unable to make sense of the difference in application, it may be that the students, having succeeded at the Secondary Entrance Assessment (SEA– a selection exam into secondary school) continued in their schooling with a heightened self-esteem. Those who did not gain
entry in the highly-valued schools may experience quite the opposite as stated by Ryan et al. (2013) who underscores the “psychological trauma of a deep sense of failure” (p. 56) at the exam that has lasting effects on students.

There is also the opinion that some students expected the school to supply all their needs thus portraying a troubling culture of dependency (Deosaran, 2016). Radha stated that “as far as they [the students] are concerned, they are supposed to be provided with.” Shazaad shared that, in order to access the state’s social welfare grants, children must attend school and therefore “would come to school in the first two or three weeks, present the social welfare form and you won’t see them again for maybe the next year.” These cases seem to concur with findings from Halsey, Heath and Ridge (1980) who identify material and cultural capital deprivation as relevant factors impacting negatively on educational opportunity and thus the actualisation of student learning potential.

**Literacy**

Another view among teachers somewhat resonates with the view of Van Vechten (2013) who explores linguistic deprivation among people of low-income households. One teacher’s view is that students from low-income households do have literacy challenges such as being unable to use Standard English in writing and reading as with many other students but yet they are able to demonstrate a measure of communicative competence. That teacher named Carol mentioned that from her experience, students “are good at expressing themselves orally, not on paper, and, even though not in Standard English, they are good at getting [their] points across.” In this case Carol is not in denial about her students’ shortcomings with regard to their command of Standard English but focusses not on their lack, but on their strength. In this way she avoids a deficit perspective by acknowledging and affirming students’ ability to nevertheless get their points across in the way that they know best.

**Expectations of students by educators**

Geeta stated that her administration’s views on the learning potential of students displayed negative profiling in that “the administration did not actually encourage you to expect anything [from the students]”. Gail also recounted that one of her colleagues at her school tended to label students negatively “Miss, dem [sic] children can’t do IT [Information Technology] for CXC [Caribbean Examination Council] they don’t have the ability.” The problem with such manner of administration and teacher labelling is that it leads to less acceptance of teacher responsibility for student learning (Diamond, Randolph & Spillane, 2004).

Geeta, having gone through a period of exposure to the Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.), on reflection, admitted that her teaching style may
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have negatively impacted on her perception of students’ learning potential: “Looking back now, I really did not believe that they [the students] were capable. I have revised that since I realised that it’s all about me and the techniques I used.” Geeta’s new understanding born of her reflection on her teaching practice was key to her professional growth (Messing, 2005).

In summarizing the data relevant to research question one (1) a variety of views were apparent. Some views of the teacher-participants tended to acknowledge the challenges of students’ life issues, whether in terms of material (Bowles & Gintis, 1976) or cultural deprivation (Bordieu & Passeron, 1977). Other views relating to students’ learning potential were more consistent with the symbolic interactionist (Ballantine & Hammack, 2012) and asset-based perspectives (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) in their focus on students’ capabilities.

Teacher-participants’ responses to issues confronting students as to their learning potential (RQ2)

Intervention initiatives, by both the administration and individual teachers, exist in schools to provide a more inclusive education for students from low-income households. Teacher-participants support administrative initiatives that include streaming with increased time for subjects, a more inclusive curriculum and pastoral care. Teacher-participants themselves outline a range of approaches to assist students of low-income households. These include establishing emotional bonds with students, improving self-esteem, offering voluntary remedial classes and implementing student-centred teaching strategies.

Administrative initiatives

Streaming with increased time for particular subjects

Streaming was also introduced as Geeta reported “they shuffled the classes, pulled out those who had the ability, [and] placed them into one class.” In addition, her administration not only offered fewer subjects to students in the 0 – 30 % test score range but also allocated more teaching time for those subjects: “We have seven periods of Maths, seven periods of English, one for conversational Spanish, while five are allocated for Social Studies”. The practice of streaming has been criticized by UNESCO (2009) who advocates for a more inclusive approach to education in that it ultimately promotes in society a greater degree of justice and wider citizen participation.

A more inclusive curriculum

The incorporation of disciplines in the schools such as the Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA), Technical Vocational (Tech. Voc.), Physical
Education and other vocational possibilities not contained in the traditional grammar-school curriculum in teacher views was to be acknowledged and affirmed.

Tessa illustrated appropriately with her comment that at her school (less-valued): “We have an active VAPA department, young men interested in visual arts, we have dance... Sir wants to introduce Drama. We are the only school in the country that does PE for Form 6.” Similarly, in her less valued school at a remote seaside location, Gail lauds her principal who “sent a [group] of children to [pursue] their seaman’s certificate. They did very well. Miss [the Principal] want to get it in the curriculum.” Gail also shared that another initiative that is being developed at her school is “called Open School which is a joint [venture] with Caribbean Fisheries doing fish preservation [and] small boat repairs.” The provision of a wider curricular scope in both Tessa’s and Gail’s schools is congruent with the FOK approach that builds on the talents and resources of students in their setting (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005).

Though the positive approach at Tessa’s school is acknowledged, the sustained implementation of the wider curriculum proved problematic. She lamented that due to lack of replacement of Tech. Voc. teachers who retired “there is no more AC [Air Condition] repairs, mechanical repairs. A lot of the footballers were into that and they were doing really well.”

**Pastoral care**

Teacher-participants explore pastoral strategies for assisting students from low-income households in the interest of achieving greater equity and for further enabling schooling to become an agent “for providing pathways out of poverty” (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p.7).

In some schools both staff and students donate cash and kind to assist students from low-income households. Parvati shared the following:

*We have a very active welfare committee and donations are done every day and our boys are pretty generous. We have community support, the principal, the administration, teachers who go out of their way and take out of their pocket.*

Respondents also noted that apart from material assistance, the pastoral care of students is also carried out by promoting a humanistic approach (Keefer, 2012). Gail notes that “the Principal emphasised love, to be safe... to know what kindness was”.

Shazaad observed that at his school: “There are two pastoral deans per year group, who liaise with the home to provide any assistance necessary”. He added:

*The majority [of students] are of lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Teachers have programmes in place in the*
classroom and if it is a case where we have to get student services involved or the social worker, they would do whatever is necessary.

Smaller class size can be advantageous for achieving better classroom management. With less students per class a teacher is afforded the opportunity to focus his/her energies more effectively. Carol, comparing her current teaching experience with that in her former school, shared that she was able to cope much better at the previous school where class sizes “were manageable because they were so much smaller.”

The above instances involving financial assistance, emotional support and a more manageable class size as vehicles of pastoral care were all seen as elements in the upbuilding of an inclusive learning context for the enhancement of student learning potential.

Teacher-participant initiatives

In continuation of the humanistic approach but now from the initiative of teachers themselves, there was acknowledgement that teaching approaches in the classroom needed improving. Kathy disclosed that “we have narrow cognitive goals. It is very certificate driven; teaching to the syllabus.” Keefer (2012), in his research, supports going beyond the cognitive domain by establishing emotional bonds especially when it comes to students from low-income households as indicative of the following cases.

With intent to encourage students facing challenges to persevere, Parvati was very open with her students: “I come from a lower socioeconomic background and a single-income household… I went through some tough times and [I] came out.” Here Parvati expresses sentiments in accord with the Liggins’ (2014) study whereby teachers themselves who emerged from low-income households felt that their experience better positioned them to assist students in the actualization of their learning potential.

Just as Paravati was able to empathise with the struggles of students from similar low-income households and harness this empathy in a helping relationship, Gail was able to identify with the struggle of students in the less valued school to the students’ benefit. Having herself attended a less-valued secondary school, Gail had high expectations for her students and encouraged them to remain steadfast because as she put it: “I was average, and I felt as if I got that push, so I pushed them to complete the syllabus as much as they can.”

Carol builds students’ self-esteem by recognising the pursuits they value such as their sporting performance. She says: “they looking for
reinforcement when they are coming to class. When they feel Miss recognize [that] ‘I am a cricketer and not just an environmental science student [they become] more to Miss’.”

Voluntary remedial classes are conducted. According to Adele “we devote half of our lunch time. They [students] get their lunch early and are there waiting so it’s just a matter of us [sic] being there and they respond to it generally well.”

Teachers shared that they utilise student-centred teaching strategies. Tessa stated that: “We try group work so the ones who are brighter could help them [the others].” At Kathy’s school “they encourage us to use technology in the classroom...looking at the different types of learners,” while Shazaad stated that he tries to “to incorporate alternative assessment.” Geeta also values a more inclusive approach due to her experience over her professional development as she lauds “the Dip. Ed. learning about different learning styles, different teaching methods.” Gail also recommended the approach of differentiated teaching (Tomlinson, 2014), stating that “we have to figure out what to tap into when teaching”.

In summarizing the data relevant to research question two (2), a variety of responses to issues confronting students from low-income households came to the fore towards greater inclusive practices geared to enhancing student learning potential. Administrative initiatives aligned to a more inclusive curriculum with focus on FOK (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005) and humanistic approaches (Keefer, 2012) were prominent. Teacher initiatives were overwhelming with a humanistic and pastoral focus (Liggins, 2014) and student-centred pedagogical strategies (Tomlinson, 2014).

**Recommendations**

Replacing any low expectations that spring from the pathologies about the poor and marginalized in the society is an ongoing duty. Teacher-participants’ views indicated awareness of “deficits” with which children of low-income households had to contend but did show remarkable sensitivity to the assets or strengths which students brought with them especially in the area of psychomotor and kinaesthetic abilities. It is recommended therefore that this awareness be strengthened in the Dip. Ed., Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations) course by developing in teachers, a way of engaging all students with an expectation of identifying their strengths and building on students’ positives in crafting learning experiences. The requirement to focus on each individual student can also be enhanced by the development of teacher expertise in differentiated classroom strategies so that they can
cater for individual learning needs. Apart from the academic subjects, viable options for alternatives should always be available.

Becoming reflective about their practice and conscious of the need for pedagogies which allow children from poor and low-income families to access learning opportunities in school is the mark of the conscientious educator. In this vein, there was an instance of real progress by Geeta in her change of attitude to students that came as a result of reflection on her work during the initial weeks of the Dip.Ed. programme. In this case teachers should be encouraged to habitually engage in reflection on their work so that improvements would be more likely to happen on a regular basis.

Some students from low-income households were perceived (as evidenced by Gail’s comments) as possessing a negative attitude towards education. However, it must be noted that students showed that with extra effort by teachers, change is possible. In Adele’s case, they indeed valued the education being offered to them in their reaction to teachers who took the responsibility of extending themselves in the light of the challenging social environment of their students. Therefore, there is potential to change a deficit view of parents and students as not valuing the education offered. Here the symbolic interactionists seem to have the edge that in focussing efforts on enabling relationships in the school context there is potential to effect change for the better. It is thus recommended that administrators promote an ethos of service among school staff in the interest of accommodating students’ learning that takes into account the peculiarities of the social context in which the schools operate.

In addition, Carol’s student appreciated her for recognising that student’s sporting ability and herein is an important cue. There is value in acknowledging the co-curricular activities where students shine as the student is validated in an arena apart from the classroom space. Teachers can thus pay attention to validating students by recognising and building upon student strengths to win them over to other pursuits in the interest of students’ holistic development.

If teachers and administrators are to be more than inadvertent perpetrators of social inequality in the classroom then consciousness of the workings of class bias in the school system is critical especially in a context of a stratified school system as in T&T. As teachers’ views tended not to incorporate much by way of analysis in the social reproduction strand, it is recommended that further consciousness be raised in this area in teacher education programmes. In the Dip. Ed. programme in particular, this is an area that can be exploited in the Educational Foundations and Issues in Education (Foundations) course.
Conclusion

While teachers did acknowledge the challenging situations experienced by students from low-income households, they, however, never profiled the students as inherently lazy or lacking ability to learn due to the students being from low-income households. In fact, many did refer to their own early backgrounds of hardship and offered their own experiences as motivation for their students.

Teacher-participants’ responses to the challenges associated with students from low-income households resonate with interactionist and asset-based views. The latter are more affirmative of students and identify a greater space for the agency of teachers as well as students in their power to determine access to schooling. They emphasise the agency and strengths of administrators and students by underscoring the potential of positive relationships in the school and incorporating talents possessed by students.

In the Dip. Ed. Programme, teachers do already possess sufficient openness to the “funds of knowledge” and “assets” possessed by students and their families. Granted this positive finding, such an affirmative disposition further developed would augur well for the success of teachers in their course of professional development.

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SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING AS A SOCIAL JUSTICE PROFESSION

Jamie L. Mc Cartney

People who work in social justice professions typically work with those who do not have a voice in the public square. Historically, these groups have been children, the aged, those poor and/or homeless, and the disabled, among others. This paper shows that those who interpret for deaf people should be classified as working in a social justice profession because its definition pertains to what sign language interpreters do. Social justice professions strive to give everyone a fair and equal opportunity in life, just as other groups enjoy. Although deaf people should be advocating for themselves, sign language interpreters do this de facto, as they get bombarded with questions regarding deaf people’s capabilities, get caught in the culture debate, and observe as discrimination of the deaf person abounds. This type of vicarious trauma can cause people in social justice professions to burn out. One hundred sign language interpreters were given a survey assessing their level of grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007). The range of grit scores (1-5) was 2.33 - 4.75 (μ 3.7, mode 3.33). Interpreters were also given qualitative questions regarding what drew them to the profession and what keeps them in the profession. Initially, only 49 got into the profession for social justice reasons, but now 70 interpreters listed social justice as the reason they continue to work in the profession. They are exhibiting what is known in the profession as ‘Deaf Heart’. Interpreters are coming alongside deaf people in order to help level the playing field.

Note to the reader:

Identity is very important within the d/Deaf community. This identification communicates to others how the individual chooses to associate: as a deaf person or as one who can hear. People who call themselves deaf may refer to word or spell it out in one of two ways. The first way is called capital or big ‘D’ Deaf, which refers to those individuals who follow norms, behaviours, and customs of the Deaf Culture in America. These individuals value things such as eyes, hands, American Sign Language, solidarity of the Deaf community, residential schools, information-sharing, and their collectivist culture (Humphrey & Alcorn,
The second way is called lowercase ‘d’ deaf, which means that the individual may sign, but choose not to associate with other d/Deaf people. An all-encompassing way in the literature to refer to those who may subscribe to Deaf Culture norms and those who do not is designated as “d/Deaf.” If the words are specifically used in this paper without the other category added, that is intentional, as only one of the specific populations of people is being referred to. Individuals who identify as hard of hearing prefer to align themselves with people who can hear and are not included with that designation of d/Deaf.

Introduction

When people are asked to think about social justice professions, they may think of those professions that work on behalf of people who cannot speak for themselves, either physically or because of a lack of power to do so. If they are able to speak out, they have historically not been able to get the right kind of attention to change anything about their situation. People in these types of groups include children, the aged, homeless people, disabled people, and so on. Sign language interpreting is not typically a profession that people would automatically associate with social justice.

There could be several reasons for this, but the main one certainly must be the fact that deafness and hearing loss are invisible disabilities (Braden, 2010; Disabled World, 2017; Invisible Disabilities Association, 2016; Tye-Murray, 2015). According to the Invisible Disabilities Association, 2016), this label speaks to disabilities that “may not be obvious to the onlooker, but can sometimes or always limit daily activities, range from mild challenges to severe limitations and vary from person to person” (para. 6). Additionally, deafness is a low-incidence invisible disability, so it is unlikely that people think about d/Deaf much simply due to the fact that deafness and hearing loss do not occur that often (Tye-Murray, 2015). If the general public is not thinking of d/Deaf people and what their lives are like, undoubtedly, they are not thinking about their extension: sign language interpreters. However, anyone who has worked as an interpreter knows that tenacity is a necessity and that the barriers sometimes seem insurmountable.

Social justice refers to the overall fairness of a society and the manner in which it divides its rewards and burdens upon groups of people...Working with marginalized groups, social justice agents or advocates are concerned with bringing equality within society. (John Glenn College of Public Affairs, n.d., para. 1)
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Social justice requires a high level of fortitude and a desire to level the playing field. Sign language interpreters work with d/Deaf people and, thus, are privy to the treatment they often receive. History teaches us that d/Deaf people have indeed been treated unfairly by their parents, friends, medical practitioners, and the whole of society.

This is not a new phenomenon; d/Deaf people have faced ill-treatment from the beginning of time. The treatment and education of d/Deaf people have been largely based on how they were viewed by society. In antiquity, females would commit infanticide if their child was deaf because this was thought to be a sign of sin (Etherington, 2014; Panda, 1999). Before the 1600s, deaf people were thought to be mentally retarded, demon-possessed, and ineducable. They were never included in society because of this. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), a leading Greek philosopher and scientist, said “those born deaf all become senseless and incapable of reason…men that are born deaf are in all cases dumb; that is to say, they can make vocal noises but cannot speak” (Daniels, 1997, p. 1). This manner of thinking that equated deafness with a lack of intelligence continued into the 16th century. During those years, deaf people were restricted from owning property, inheriting land or money, and were labelled mentally insane (de Saint-Loup, 1996; Sacks, 1989). Some people attempted to educate deaf children, but only through lipreading and speech. However, starting in the 1600s, a handful of individuals were able to educate deaf people by using motions made with the hands. Even though it was in the latter 1700s when positive changes occurred to advance deaf people into the upper echelons of society, injustices did not cease. There was plenty of experimental testing that continued on into the 17th century, which involved doctors pouring hot fluid into patients’ ears, puncturing patients’ eardrum, or bleeding and leeching to ‘cure’ them of their deafness (Lane, 1989).

This maltreatment at the hands of the majority culture continued into the 1800-1900s. An individual who is not thought of as being an oppressor of deaf people is Alexander Graham Bell, undoubtedly for his great invention of the telephone. Bell was also a teacher of the deaf and a proponent of educating deaf people through speech and discouraging sign language. Although he had a mother who was hard of hearing and a wife who was deaf, Bell was a staunch believer that d/Deaf people should not marry other d/Deaf people. He noticed the numbers of those born congenitally deaf were higher when both parents were deaf. His stance on eugenics and his desire for a pure race culminated in a paper he wrote in 1883 entitled “Upon the formation of a deaf variety of the human race.” He went so far as to say that intermarrying and having children would lead to a “defective race of human beings [and that it] would be a great calamity
to the world” (Gannon, 1981, p. 75). Bell believed schools for deaf children only encouraged this type of intermarrying (Evans, Broido, Brown, & Wilke, 2017). At the infamous Conference of Milan in 1880 where the use of sign language was indubitably quashed for the better part of a 100 years, Bell was there adding his voice to the ones who wanted sign language vanquished (Rooted in Rights, 2017).

Between 1933 and 1945, oppression climaxed in Hitler’s Germany when the view was perpetuated that deafness, among other things, was going to pollute the German race. Thus, eugenics became a reality when d/Deaf people were forcibly sterilized and/or ordered to concentration camps or the gas chambers (Biesold, 1999; Dunai, 2002; Ridley, 2015; Ryan & Schuchman, 2002).

It has only been within the past 50 years in which the United States took notice of d/Deaf people and their ill-treatment. Recent developments which should have given d/Deaf people a hand up are the amount of legislation that came about starting in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement and continuing on until today. Legislation passed in the 1970s until the current time include the following: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; Public Law 94-142 (renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in 1990); the Americans with Disabilities Act; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Amendments; and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act. These legislations mandate that deaf people be treated differently and be given certain “helps”; however, d/Deaf people still run into institutionalized oppression and discrimination.

It is somewhat surprising that d/Deaf people would still be labelled as marginalized in the United States considering that this is the land of privilege “with liberty and justice for all” (4 USC §4, italics mine). These laws were seemingly passed to pave a better way for deaf people in terms of their education and rehabilitation. Although the legislation has helped moderately in the U.S., d/Deaf people are still marginalized and disenfranchised (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). This manifest itself in employment: the types and amount of employment that people get, unemployment, or underemployment. It also occurs in the strong-arming of agencies and professionals who do not feel they need to adhere to those legislations because they feel the laws do not apply to them and/or deaf people rarely litigate. Whereas d/Deaf people in other countries struggle for more basic needs, those in the United States mostly struggle with institutionalized discrimination and have been counselled out of the academic setting and into a vocation (Bowe, 2003). This can take the form of d/Deaf people struggling for fair job opportunities, wages, and communication access.
Video relay, which began in 2003, is another place where inequalities surface. People who are d/Deaf are also discriminated on phone calls because much of the time, they are calling people who are not deaf. People who are d/Deaf used to place a phone call by using a teletype machine, or TTY. The teletypewriter had couplers in which a regular telephone handset would fit into and convert beeps (when each key was struck) into letters, so deaf people could read it on the display. When d/Deaf people call places to request an interpreter, they are told quite often that the place has never hired one before, so they must not have to do it. Additionally, d/Deaf people are told many times that they need to bring their own “signer”.

The Americans with Disabilities Act is clear on the places where d/Deaf people have a right to request an interpreter. If places have over 25 employees and the venue is one where a person has a right to an interpreter, then the place has to pay, unless doing so would cause undue hardship. The number of employees for state and local government to comply with the legislation was initially 25; then, the number was lowered to 15. Currently, the law is that state and local governments must comply with the ADA irrespective of the number of employees places have (The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2005). The U.S. Department of Justice (2014) states that,

The ADA requires that title II entities (state and local governments) and title III entities (businesses and non-profit organizations that serve the public) communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities. The goal is to ensure that communication with people with these disabilities is equally effective as communication with people without disabilities. (para.2)

It goes on to say that a sign language interpreter is one of the acceptable ways to communicate with a d/Deaf person. People still buck the system and try to get around having to pay for an interpreter. This unfair practice often goes unchecked because of the reasons previously mentioned.

Even though these legislations require certain allowances, deaf people still struggle to find acceptance regarding their communication preferences. Although many d/Deaf people do not view themselves as disabled, the medical community does. These professionals, with due diligence, strive to “fix” deaf people by suggesting cochlear implants or auxiliary aids and by dissuading d/Deaf people and family members from learning sign language. They say this because they believe doing so will interfere with a child’s ability to learn English, even though that has been shown to be untrue (Clayton, 2015; Cummins, 2006; Marschark & Hauser,
Since those in the medical community have clout, their advice is often heeded. This has had a detrimental effect on d/Deaf people’s ability to access a first language and their ability to navigate their familial structures, friendships, and society.

Sign language interpreters spend a large percentage of their time, not only interpreting between individuals who are d/Deaf and those who can hear, but they spend an inordinate amount of time educating people who are not deaf. Interpreters answer questions dealing with the driving, working, and parenting abilities of deaf people, explain and justify their own role as the interpreter, and so on. The preference, far and away, would be for interpreters to just interpret these questions from the non-deaf person and the answers from the d/Deaf person. However, interpreters are often sought out when the d/Deaf person is not present and asked these questions. Partially, it must be due to the fact that the person who can hear feels more comfortable talking to someone else who is able to hear. People who are d/Deaf may not be comfortable asserting their rights or may not wish to cause conflict; thus, interpreters are often put in this position of educating and advocating. Advocating, according to Baker-Shenk (2014) is one who “listens to the concerns of the oppressed group and then advocates/speaks for them in the halls of power” (p. 7). This constant process of combating misconceptions with education can lead to burnout in the sign language interpreting profession (see Bower, 2015; Dean & Pollard, 2001; McCartney, 2004; Schwenke, 2012). It can also lead to vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue. Humphrey and Alcorn (2007) expertly explain the difference between these two. Whereas vicarious trauma is when a person feels like the injustice and abuse have happened to him/her personally, compassion fatigue is when the person has observed it so many times, that s/he becomes numb or jaded to it. Several authors have warned against the dangers of vicarious trauma as it relates to the sign language interpreting profession (Anderson, 2011; Andert & Trites, 2014; Dean & Pollard, 2001; Harvey, 2003; Macdonald, 2015). The ways in which vicarious trauma and compassion fatigue occur is talked about, so that interpreters can be proactive, as opposed to reactive.

Social justice entails working as an advocate in order to advance the status of the group as a whole. The only difference between sign language interpreting and other social justice professions is that interpreters should never speak out for the people; rather, interpreters should encourage d/Deaf people to speak out on their own behalf. Within the interpreting profession, this is termed functioning as an ‘ally’ (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007). In the United States especially, speaking out for deaf people can be seen as one more oppressive act that deaf people have dealt with for
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centuries. This would only promulgate the exclusion of d/Deaf people and dismantle them of their rights.

The collaborative idea that is prevalent in social justice where the whole group is helped fits nicely with the collectivist culture. Those who subscribe to a collectivist culture would be termed “Deaf,” with the “d” being capitalized. For this group, American Sign Language (ASL), relationships with others who are like-minded, residential schools, eyes, hands, Deaf Culture, and solidarity are all valued (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Lane, Pillard, & Hedberg, 2011; Leigh, 2009; Mindess, 2014). This solidarity seeks to offer encouragement to deal with the institutional oppression that occurs at the hands of the individualistic mainstream. Because Deaf Culture is not the prevailing culture of the United States or any country in the world for that matter, it is not typically highly regarded or realized by those in the larger culture. “By assuming one normative way to do things (move, speak, learn, and so forth), society privileges those who carry out these functions as prescribed and oppresses those who use other methods” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010, p. 242).

Another aspect of working in social justice is “… promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity” (Toowoomba Catholic Education, 2006, para 1). It would be helpful if deaf people were seen as being members of a linguistic minority, as opposed to a disability group. The United Nations has a charter to protect individuals who are of a different linguistic minority: The Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (1992). Most people do not consider deaf people to be included in this group (United Nations Charter, 47/135). It seems that because most people in power do not understand the language, they continue to label deaf people as disabled. Those who are d/Deaf cannot get out from under this oppression and, thus, choose to call themselves disabled in order to receive financial assistance from the government. It is an iterative process.

As opposed to being viewed as one of the subsets of the broad term disability, Eckert (2010) and others have suggested that an ethnic group comprised of Deaf people be examined. In light of how the ancient Greeks defined ethnos and how current day Smith (as cited by Eckert, 2010) defined ethnic groups as having a “collective name, myth of common descent, a shared history, a shared culture, an association with a specific territory, and a sense of solidarity” (Smith, as cited by Eckert, 2010, p. 317), it makes sense. This push for Deaf people to embrace the concept of “Deafnicity” is to counteract the oppression, microaggressions (Sue, 2010), and audism that d/Deaf people experience daily.

Further research shows that characteristics that enable people to be recognized as having a distinct ethnic group includes a collective name,
feeling of community, norms for behaviour, values, knowledge, kinship, customs, social structure, language, art forms, and history (Lane, 2005). Deaf people fit into this category like any of the other groups. Many of the requisites above are predicated on the fact that Deaf people subscribe to a different culture: a collectivist culture (Humphrey & Alcorn, 2007; Mindess, 2014).

Audism is a term coined by Tom Humphries who is Deaf. He defined it as the “notion that one is superior based on one's ability to hear or to behave in the manner of one who hears” (Humphries, 1977, p.12). It is used to describe someone who makes decisions or comments that demonstrate his/her belief that hearing is better and more valued than not hearing. People who are d/Deaf do not only face discrimination in the educational realm, but they experience it everywhere: in the public square, in their workplace, with their healthcare, and in the legal/criminal justice setting. Just like people who are able to hear, deaf people go about their daily lives interfacing in public. They go to stores and social events; they make phone calls and go to appointments. However, people who are d/Deaf do not have the same luxuries that people who can hear have. Within the profession and the Deaf Community, this is called ‘hearing privilege’ (Feminist Technology Collective, 2014; Nelson, 2012; The Goodwill Project, 2017). People who are able to hear do not understand the benefits they enjoy simply because they speak the language of the majority culture. They are able to go to public places at any time without alerting the place that they are coming and are able to take full advantage of whatever the place has to offer. They also do not need to alert amusement parks or movie theaters in advance in order for them to prepare for them. When they fly, they may roll their eyes at the flight attendant’s spiel; however, d/Deaf people have never heard it. They see gestures from the flight attendant, but it is hardly linguistically commensurate.

Interpreters feel their profession is social justice because these audist acts are insensitive. This would be just as insensitive as a committee who decided to have a meeting on the second floor of a building with a non-working elevator when a physically disabled person was a part of their committee. The deaf experience can many times be summed up by a lack of inclusivity and an inability of the majority to see what the world would be like as a d/Deaf person. These ideas show up in policies where d/Deaf people who have to pass a speech and hearing test in order to be a teacher in a public school in some parts of the United States. Deaf people can obviously work at a residential school, but many times face a closed door when they attempt to teach hearing students in a public school through the use of a sign language interpreter.
There are four ways into the deaf community; thus, four ways an interpreter can be involved with social justice and d/Deaf people. These ways are called the Avenues to Membership in the Deaf Community (See Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980, to see a diagram of these avenues) and consist of the following: social, political, audiological, and linguistic. Social entails the amount of time that d/Deaf people get together with other d/Deaf people or with those who care about the Deaf Community. The political avenue speaks to the level that an individual would go to support d/Deaf people politically, either through laws, legislation, or lobbying. This is place where interpreters can be very involved in waging the social justice war as an ally for deaf people. The audiological avenue is the amount of hearing loss an individual has. The linguistic avenue is the amount of skill/expertise that a person has with sign language. Surrounding the intersections of these avenues of membership is the word attitude. People who are d/Deaf appreciate those who have a good attitude. Individuals who perhaps are not as strong in one of the avenues may be chosen to work with d/Deaf people because of the individual’s good attitude. Sign language interpreters (who are able to hear) will never be in the core of the Deaf community assuming they are high in every other avenue, due to the fact they do not possess audiologic loss.

Historically, people who take power away from d/Deaf people are those who are not d/Deaf. These people do this out of their own ignorance, misunderstanding, or misconception about d/Deaf people. Many of these misconceptions centre on people’s perspective of deafness. There are two mindsets which people can hold toward deafness. One perspective is the medical view, which asserts that deafness is indeed a disability and something to be fixed. The deaf people in this group would try to blend in as much as possible with the larger culture by using their voice, reading lips, trying to hear, and appearing as “normal” as possible. The other mindset is the cultural view. This perspective embraces deafness and regards it not as an impairment, but rather a linguistic minority with its own distinct culture. This culture is much different from those who are able to hear.

Interpreters, as well as others, can support deaf people and not oppress them by respecting how they identify. If Deaf people prefer to identify as culturally deaf, then that should be respected. We should understand that means that these people would prefer not to be labelled as hard of hearing or as people with a hearing loss. For these people, they would use ASL (in the case of the United States and parts of Canada) and these individuals are culturally proud of their collective accomplishments. The contention between these two mindsets has been the cause of much angst, oppression, and disagreement for d/Deaf people.
Those who can hear need to see themselves not as benefactors to d/Deaf people, but as equals in this society and societies around the world. Perhaps if they did, sign language interpreting would not be viewed as a social justice profession, but rather a profession that works with people who just so happen to use a different first language and have a different culture. Deaf people can make significant contributions to our society, at large, and our institutions, in specific. However, Pena, Bensimon, and Colyar (2006) contend that people’s lack of knowledge regarding another’s culture may unwittingly stymy the oppressed individual from succeeding. This is where the social injustice starts.

**Objectives/ Purpose of the Study**

The author felt that those involved with social justice professions, namely sign language interpreting, would need to possess tenacity. The constant discrimination and oppression can be physically and emotionally onerous to witness. Fortitude and tenacity are required characteristics for social justice work, as well (Clauss-Ehlers, 2010). This works in tandem with a recent research interest of the author: Grit. Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly (2007) define grit as “perseverance and passion for long-term goals” (p. 1087). It is comprised of two traits: perseverence of effort and consistency of interest. Grit is also synonymous with persistence, fortitude, and zeal. It can also mean determination and a willingness to persevere when an individual faces an obstacle. Within sign language interpreting, challenges present themselves all the time. The way interpreters deal with these challenges can make or break an opportunity for a d/Deaf person, interpreters themselves, and the interpreting profession at large.

**Research Questions**

McCartney (2016) conducted a study whereby 100 sign language interpreters were surveyed regarding their grit level. In addition to the quantitative information, the researcher also queried respondents for qualitative information. Qualitative analyses were assessed for the reasons interpreters gave for the following: 1) their reasons for initially choosing sign language interpreting as a profession, and 2) reasons that kept them motivated to continue working in the profession. Since interpreters are privy to vicarious trauma and oppression, the researcher felt that these interpreters must have other reasons that sustained them, specifically a commitment to social justice, within the profession. It was thought that
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these reasons and a high grit score would prevent an interpreter from getting out of the profession.

Data Collection Methods

The researcher presented respondents with the 12-item Grit Scale by Duckworth et al. (2007). This is a Likert-type self-report questionnaire designed to assess an individual’s level of grit. This questionnaire has high validity and internal consistency of $\alpha=.85$. Plus, the questionnaire is easy to take and does not require a long-time commitment on the part of the respondent. Sample questions are as follows: “I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.” “New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.” “My interests change from year to year.” Respondents are given five options to every one of the twelve possible questions: “Very much like me” “Mostly like me” “Somewhat like me” “Not much like me” and “Not like me at all” (Duckworth et al., 2007).

Out of the twelve questions, respondents can get a maximum of 60 points. When questionnaires are rated, the final score is divided by twelve and respondents are left with a score as high as 5. That score would indicate that the individual was exceptionally gritty, a score of 2.5 would be medium grit, and anything lower than that would be considered a low grit score.

The researcher coded respondents’ answers to the qualitative research questions and grouped them into the following categories: familial reasons, intellectual reasons, societal/social justice reasons, and monetary reasons. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they had a family member who was d/Deaf, the researcher coded that as a familial reason. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they liked the challenge or were good at learning languages, the researcher coded that as an intellectual reason. If respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they wanted to be involved with social justice or felt that d/Deaf people were treated unfairly and they wanted to help level the playing field, the researcher coded that as a societal/social justice reason. Finally, if respondents stated that they initially got into the profession because they liked or needed the compensation, then that was coded as a monetary reason.

In addition to that, each answer was also grouped into one of two categories: extrinsic or intrinsic reasons. For example, if respondents stated that they got into the profession because they liked the language, then that would be an intrinsic reason. However, if respondents stated that
they were told by other people that they were good at using the language (ASL), then the researcher coded that as an extrinsic reason. These types of groupings allowed the researcher to look at respondents’ answers within several different categories to see what their motivations were for getting and staying in the profession of sign language interpreting.

Results

Respondents in the study demonstrated medium to high grit. The range of Grit scores (1-5) was 2.33 - 4.75, with the mean being 3.7. The mode was 3.33 and there were eleven people that had that score. There were 90 females (mean score of 3.55) and 10 males (mean score of 3.04). Those numbers are obviously nonsignificant since the groups were not of the same size. Once it was determined that respondents mostly had medium to high grit, the focus then turned to the qualitative questions. One of the statistically significant results from the study dealt with the societal/social justice category. Specifically, only 49 people who initially chose interpreting did so for societal/social justice reasons. However, seventy (70) people listed societal/social justice as the reason they were still motivated to interpret. The 42.9% change is extremely heartening. It shows that in this particular study, respondents were concerned with how d/Deaf people were treated by others and that the respondents were trying to combat that injustice. Instead of allowing their frustration to chase them out of the profession, they were just as passionate as ever to even the scales.

Summary

The sign language interpreting profession is primarily a social justice one since interpreters deal with institutionalized discrimination and oppression by virtue of being present when d/Deaf people need an interpreter. Interpreters are in high demand and the work is plentiful. They often go from one oppressive assignment to another, educating and advocating all the while. Interpreters are on the front line of fielding careless comments and experiencing vicarious trauma because of their unique position. It is beneficial for interpreter educators to prepare students for this profession, give them tools to cope, and let them know this profession deals with social justice. Sign language interpreting and social justice require someone to be strong physically, mentally, and emotionally. It cannot be done in isolation.

Regardless of how d/Deaf people choose to label themselves, society owes it to them to at least try and advance their position and upward
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mobility. These barriers that structural discriminatory practices have put in place are themselves handicapping. Allowing d/Deaf people to have a seat at the table in order to educate and share academic space would help to diversify the type of people who wield power and would certainly promulgate the “justice as transformation mindset” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 116). It would give administrators a chance to eradicate hegemonic and discriminatory practices at their respective institutions. This small change would endorse “equity-mindedness”, (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 64), as opposed to “deficit-mindedness” (Dowd & Bensimon, 2015, p. 75) and allow d/Deaf people to be viewed as equals. These deficits have been on-going and are destructive.

Two necessary traits sign language interpreters need to have, other than grit, is that of Deaf-Heart and leadership. The Deaf-Heart Movement has surfaced in recent years as a way for d/Deaf people to discuss what an interpreter needs to do in order to be successful within the ASL/English Interpreting profession. If an interpreter does not act culturally sensitive, is not successful as an interpreter, or cognizant of the struggles that d/Deaf people have had to endure, this tends to be the reason in the minds of Deaf people: the interpreter did not have DEAF-HEART\(^1\) (Colonomos, 2013; Decker, 2015). This means that the interpreter had no concept of the d/Deaf experience; was not mindful of what d/Deaf people need in order to communicate; was not an ally to the Deaf community, and so on. Within the last couple of years, a common complaint was that interpreters had lost Deaf-Heart. That mindset was not borne out in this particular study as respondents felt very strongly that societal/social justice reasons motivated them to remain in the profession. It seems interpreters in this study do understand the d/Deaf experience and they stand with d/Deaf people to petition the majority for equal opportunities and equal rights.

The second requisite trait that interpreters need to have is that of leadership in order to “empower clients” (Chung & Bemak, 2011, p. 159). Coyne (2013) contends that interpreters do need leadership in order to bring about social justice while working as a sign language interpreter. He encourages interpreters to employ transformational leadership as its “goal … is to empower others” (para. 28). That resonates with many tenets of the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Specifically, tenet 4.4 states that interpreters should “facilitate communication access and equality and

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\(^1\) This convention of writing out words in all capital letters is the way that glossing in American Sign Language is done. This means that there are signs for each of these words and the words function as a compound, meaning that the two signs work together to mean one thing.
support the full interaction and independence of consumers” (Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, 2005).

Social justice is broad and incorporates many professions that try to elevate the conditions of a group or groups of people. Sign language interpreters share many elements of this work in that deaf people are a disenfranchised and oppressed group of people. Although there have been many advancements in the United States, d/Deaf people still experience institutional discrimination and misconceptions. The impetus behind this contention is in large part due to how people who are d/Deaf view themselves and how others perceive them. It goes back to the disagreement between the two mindsets: the medical view and the cultural view. Deaf people who are culturally deaf and proud to subscribe to a different culture are not understood by the general populace. Interpreters strive to clarify these ubiquitous misconceptions that people hold by constantly educating. They may also be engaged in social justice by attending social events, using ASL, and being involved in political protests and fight to have legislation passed that would advance the status of d/Deaf people. Interpreters experienced a high level of tenacity, or grit in this study. On a scale of 1-5, the mean of interpreters’ grit level was 3.7.

The study (McCartney, 2016) applied the construct of grit to the signed and spoken language literature. No studies had been conducted until that point that combined the construct of grit with sign language interpreting. This study is not proposing that someone with a low level of grit cannot be successful. Medium to high levels of grit may, however, allow interpreters to remain in the profession when hardships come, instead of succumbing to burnout. Also, in this study, the reasons interpreters gave for remaining in this profession and engaging in this work was social justice. They displayed a promising amount of Deaf-Heart.

References


http://www.streetleverage.com/2015/01/sign-language-interpreter-
education-returning-to-deaf-heart/


Sign Language Interpreting as a Social Justice Profession


EDUCATING ERIC Q:  
A Student with an Emotional-Behavioural Disability in an 
Inclusive Education System

Lemoy Petit-Hunte

This qualitative study adopted a social ecological approach to explain the support structures that were in place to mediate the education needs of Eric Q, a student with an emotional-behavioural disability in a general education classroom, at a primary school in Trinidad and Tobago. That exploration also gave light to how the supportive elements were being used. Purposeful sampling was used to select the eight participants and data used in the analysis were from interviews, observations of lessons, and a questionnaire. A Semantic Differential Scale was used with Eric. The findings indicated the presence of elements of support, but an absence of (a) teacher professional development related directly to managing Eric’s challenging behaviours, (b) a positive partnership between the school and Eric’s home, (c) motivational supports to Eric in the classroom, (d) a broad-based approach to the provision of social work support, and (e) a lack of teacher self-efficacy for educating Eric in the general education classroom. The insights gained from the study can sensitize a range of stakeholders in education, within a Trinidad and Tobago context, to issues that may need to be addressed for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Introduction

Globally, educators are faced with a worrisome growth in the occurrence and classroom manifestation of challenging and disruptive behaviours that impede instruction and student learning, as well as a rapidly accelerating number of students who are failing to develop reading competency; many
of those students have been identified as having an emotional-behavioural disorder (EBD) (Kamps & Tankersley, 1996; Trout, Nordness, Pierce, & Epstein, 2003). Educating students identified as having an EBD in the general education classroom is perhaps one of the most complex and daunting task for teachers and one of the most difficult challenges facing public education today (Osher, Osher, & Smith, 1994; Trout et al., 2003). The changing intensity and growing number of children in public schools who have an EBD have created an urgent need for educators to develop a fundamental conceptualization of how to meet socio-emotional, academic, and behavioural needs of those at-risk students, and broaden their understandings of support for meaningful inclusion (Forness & Kavale, 2000; Trout et al., 2004).

While almost all teachers in general education classrooms have at least one or two students who have an EBD, and while inclusive education can serve to effectively educate those students, that success is dependent upon the provision of appropriate support (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004). Nevertheless, the literature reviewed articulated issues that emerge out of a lack of provision of professional development opportunities, clear communication of higher expectations for teaching students with EBD, social work services, motivational supports, and home-school partnership which are key support structures required for meaningful inclusion of this at-risk student population.

Inclusive Education

Throughout the world, many definitions of inclusive education have emerged that range from “a set of principles which ensures that the student with a disability is viewed as a valued and needed member of the community in every respect” (Uditsky, 1993, p. 88) to, extending the scope of ordinary schools to include a greater diversity of children (Clark, Dyson, & Millward, 1995). Within the last thirty years, there has been a growing consensus among policy makers in education fields that all children have the right to be educated together. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004) which posited that all children with disabilities have the right to receive their education in the least restrictive environment, and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) which asserted that general education classrooms should accommodate all children regardless of their intellectual, social, emotional, physical, linguistic or other conditions, promote principles of inclusive education.

By the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, general education was considered by policy-makers in non-Caribbean countries to be the least restrictive environment for all learners. That thinking gave rise to the
provision of support services into the regular classroom, and the provision of a continuum of support became the principle for successful inclusive education (Villa & Thousand, 2003). The Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago followed international trends in the key objectives of establishing as priorities accessibility to educational opportunities for all children, and the delivery of quality education to citizens, at all levels of the education system. In seeking to effect those priorities, the Student Support Services Division was established to provide on-going support to all students in the education system wherever needed. Local initiatives of inclusion were situated within the Ministry of Education’s reform and Seamless Education approach which was designed to facilitate all learners from Early Childhood Care and Education to tertiary education, inclusive of those like Eric Q who might otherwise be marginalized.

Eric Q: A Brief Description
Eric Q had reportedly been exhibiting externalizing behaviours for seven years. He reportedly demonstrated the following behavioural characteristics to the extent that they were significantly apparent at both his school and home during that period of time:

• Fighting, hitting others

• Blaming others for his actions

• Destroying property

• Becoming angered, annoyed, and upset easily

• Agitating and provoking his peers to a level of verbal or physical assault

• Making inappropriate comments to others, for example, students and teachers

• Bothering other students who are trying to listen or work

• Not resolving conflict situations appropriately

• Grabbing things away from others

• Indicating that no one likes him and no one cares about him
Failing to work appropriately with peers

Becoming physically aggressive with teacher

Due to the nature of these characteristics, Eric’s disability was categorized as a conduct disability. His word recognition, reading comprehension, and overall reading level were two years below his then current class level. While Eric could successfully be educated within a system of inclusion, certain support structures had to be in place to make his inclusion meaningful.

Purpose of the Paper
This study was done to describe the service provided for Eric under inclusive education and proposed to do so by determining what supports for meaningful inclusion were in place at Eric’s school, and how the supports were being used. The objectives of this paper are twofold, namely to (1) identify the supports present at the participating school and (2) describe how the supports were being used.

Delimitations of the Study
The investigation was delimited to eight participants and one primary school located in Trinidad.

Significance
This small-scale study can serve to enhance understandings of the kinds of support structures and networks needed for the meaningful inclusion of one of the most challenging categories of students, and can sensitize teachers, school administrators, and policy-makers at the Ministry of Education of Trinidad and Tobago to issues that may need to be addressed for successful implementation and maintenance of inclusive education.

Theoretical Overview
Inclusion is not just a school issue; it extends to the communities in which the children and their families live. Inclusion is not only a disability issue but is built on the premise that all children are members of families, communities, and a general society that contribute toward the shaping of their character; the conditions of which often influence their behaviours at school (Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005). Educator’s beliefs about inclusion influence its implementation, and the perceptions of families, teachers, and administrators about inclusion
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influence how inclusion practices are planned and carried out (Wagner et al., 2005). Thus, what emerges as important in exploring inclusion practices is to be explicit in discussing the stakeholders’ perceptions at all levels of the student’s environment. Social ecology is a theoretical framework that provides for a study of people in an environment and the influences on one another (Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, & Rinderle, 2006). Oetzel and colleagues add that this framework allows for the integration of multiple levels and contexts to establish the “big picture” (p.126). A socio-ecological orientation, as it pertains to educating children with EBD, provides the foundation for this kind of interaction among various subsystems.

Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) ecological systems theory was most aligned with the contextual background, problem, and purpose of this study, and facilitated the exploration not only of Eric’s perceptions based on his experience of support but allowed the voices of key stakeholders at different levels of his network to be heard. Broffenbrenner posited that in order to understand human development, one must consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs. Ecological systems theory describes the environment in terms of four levels - macro-system, exo-systems, meso-systems, and micro-systems (Bronfenbrenner). Micro-systems refer to the relationships between a developing person and the immediate environment, such as school and family. Meso-systems refer to the organizational factors that shape the environment within which interpersonal relations occur, for example, the relations between Eric’s home and the school in which he was a member. Exo-systems comprise the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that directly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the person lives. For Eric, an example of this was the relationship between his home and his mother’s workplace, while for his mother, an example was the relation between Eric’s school and the neighbourhood peer group. The macrosystem is composed of the overarching pattern of the other subsystems that are characteristic of a given culture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, hazards, and opportunity structures that are embedded in each of these broader systems (Brofenbrenner).

The Literature Review

Students with Emotional-Behavioural Disability (EBD)
Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (U.S. Department of Education, 1982) defines EBD as a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree which adversely affects educational performance:

1. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intelligence, sensory or health factors.
2. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.
6. The term may also include children who have schizophrenia. The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance (Section 300.7 (c) (4) (i)).

To be eligible, the student must have a problem in at least one of the aforementioned areas, to a marked degree, and to the point that it adversely affects educational performance (intensity), over a long period of time (duration), in two different settings, one of which is the school (pattern) (Forness & Kavale, 2000; Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). Students with EBD can be grouped into two categories that tend to overlap; internalizing and externalizing disorders (Coleman & Vaughn, 2000). Coleman and Vaughn refer to externalizing behaviour as being “uncontrollable, aggressive, acting out, and conduct disorder” (p. 25).

Children with EBD were historically treated within restrictive community and school settings through the use of behavioural-change procedures commonly used with children classified as being mentally ill. In spite of the representation of EBD as a single federal grouping of educational disability, students with EBD may possess a range of educational and social issues (Wagner et al., 2005; Walker, Zeller, Close, Webber, & Gresham, 1999). In the dimension of conduct disability, (a multivariate of teacher-rated behaviours such as disobedience, aggression, and irritability), students identified as EBD far exceed their peers without EBD across all grade levels and across genders (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Wagner et al., 2005).
Inclusive Education and the Education of Students with EBD

Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan, and Shaw (2002) stated “inclusion is seen to involve the identification and minimizing of barriers to learning and participation and the maximizing of resources to support learning participation” (p. 13). When applied to education, inclusion is primarily about responding to student diversity, respecting differences, being open to new ideas, and empowering all levels of stakeholders (Booth et al., 2002; Carrington, 1999). Hegarty (2001) describes inclusion as a process whereby the school reforms its curricula and organizational provisions in response to students’ individual differences. Stockall and Gartin (2002) and Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) similarly opine that inclusion implies a sense of acceptance of all students. That process is often viewed as having more to do with principles of teacher attitude and response to individual differences than with specific instructional configurations. Such thinking has led to concentrated emphasis on physical placements and affective components with neglect of other aspects of the educational process (Stockall & Gartin, 2002; Voltz et al., 2001).

Generally, students with an emotional-behavioural disorder have been found to perform less well academically than their peers who have learning disabilities, and those who do not have disabilities (Cullinan & Sabornie, 2004; Wehby, Lane, & Falk, 2003). Sutherland, Copeland, and Wehby (2001) reported that in the classroom setting, teachers provided less direct instruction to students identified as high aggressors, and such students received less attention educationally. The prominent idea was that the behaviour of students with EBD needed to be controlled before they could be taught, therefore placing less emphasis on their academic needs (Wehby et al., 2003). Without knowing the challenges and strengths of students with EBD within specific content and skill areas, it was difficult to know what interventions were necessary to improve educational outcomes (Trout et al., 2003). Additionally, the limited attention given to their academic needs created a major gap in understanding how to meet the academic needs of this at-risk group, resulting in outcomes of high rates of absenteeism, and low grade-point averages (Trout et al., 2003).

If all children should learn together, then the diverse needs must not only be recognized, but there must be some proactive response to meeting those needs. Nevertheless, school systems, in many cases, do not individualize programmes for special needs students (Sutherland et al., 2001). Consequently, these students generally do not receive the special attention they need and to which they are entitled within inclusive
education (Sutherland et al., 2001; Trout et al., 2003). What thus occurs is actually descriptive of exclusionary practices.

**Motivation as Support**

Bai (2006) defines motivation as “an internal state that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction” (p. 7). The behavioural and academic challenges that students with EBD present require teachers who are motivated to work with this population of students and place an onus on schools to provide ongoing motivational supports to teachers. In school settings, teachers exhibit both internal and external motivation. Internal motivation includes their personal values and beliefs that they use to decide what they want to achieve, while external motivation is acquired over time. This is influenced by their accumulated experiences, interactions with others, education, training, and environment (Bai, 2006; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). To motivate students, it is important for school administrators to motivate teachers to accept responsibility for student learning. Teachers who are motivated exhibit efficacy, goal setting, and persistence. For struggling learners (like many students with EBD), one of the keys to success is having teachers who can motivate them to believe that they can succeed (Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). If students with EBD are to rise to the expectations of higher standards, the kinds of motivation that teachers provide can be critical to their academic success (Alderman, 2004).

**Expectations for Teaching Students with EBD**

Teachers often identify students with EBD as the least desirable to have in the classroom and many are uncertain about how to best serve students at risk for learning and behaviour problems (Lane, Gresham, & O'Shaughnessy, 2002; Wagner et al., 2005). Hayling, Cook, Gresham, State, and Kern (2008) state that burdensome class sizes, confusing role expectations by school administrators, and a lack of administrative support have been identified by teachers as examples of negative experiences they have encountered in attempting to educate students with EBD in general classrooms. Hayling and colleagues as well as Trout et al. (2003) stress that support from school leaders, in treating with an at-risk category of students perceived as in need of more individualized and intensive services, is critical.

It is important for teachers to convey clear expectations to their students. Central to improving student outcomes for low-performing students are the provision of clear expectations for instruction and student learning, and dedicating resources to build the knowledge and skills of
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teachers (Alderman, 2004; Hayling et al., 2008). Within inclusive education, school administrators are expected to provide teachers with the support of well-defined expectations for improving the performance of students with EBD (Wehby et al., 2003). Teacher professional development plays a key role in that support system.

Professional Development as Support
Although teachers generally support high standards for teaching and learning, many are not prepared and need additional support to implement effective teaching practices based on high standards. Sawka, McCurd, and Mannella (2002) and Sutherland et al. (2001) described the academic performance of students with EBD as inversely related to their antisocial behaviour. Those researchers similarly suggested that teachers need professional development training for specific instructional and behaviour management strategies that are designed to improve students’ academic and adaptive skills. Sutherland et al. (2001) emphasized the perceptions that students have of teachers and administrators can impede student learning and impact their behaviour in the classroom. In addition to the use of professional development supports, teachers also need support in understanding the importance of how they are perceived by their students. In more effectively addressing challenging behaviours of students with EBD, working hand-in-hand with the provision of professional development, is ready access to and use of the services of support personnel such as those provided by school social workers (Sutherland et al., 2001).

The Social Worker’s Role
Over the last twenty years, educators have highlighted the growing need for expanding traditional school services to accommodate the needed comprehensive and coordinated services to students and their families through social work services (McKinnon 2001). The increasingly volatile nature of family structures and communities has affected a growing awareness that there are significant numbers of students at risk in the educational process due to their social context. McKinnon and colleagues posited that the child and the structure of his relationships outside of school have a marked influence on his or her performance in the classroom, hence the need for coordinated and comprehensive services to the child and his family through social work services.

Wagner et al. (2006) suggested that the school social worker should be placed at a critical point in the natural ecology of the child, his or her family, and community. The social worker, working collaboratively with
teachers and parents, contributes greatly toward more effective educational practices for at-risk or disadvantaged students (Constable & Walberg, 1988; Frey & Nichols, 2003; Hare, 1988; Wagner et al., 2006). This is descriptive of a socio-ecological model in which the social worker strives toward the development of the child’s personal control over his or her own life through improving the quality of interactions between the child and his social environment. The collaborative interactions between the service providers and families, while increasing the visibility of the social worker in the classroom, simultaneously enhance the likelihood of positive change in the education of children with EBD (McKinnon et al., 2001; Wagner et al., 2005).

**Family Support Systems**

The primary mean to supply human needs is expected to be provided by the most important of all mediating systems; the family. Constable and Walberg (1988) reported that children with EBD are put in a better position to cope with the complexity of life through the networking of families, support systems, and schools. Whereas, traditionally, some schools have exhibited rejection of parents in a variety of ways, many schools have begun to move away from a narrow focus on the child as an individual to consider the child as a member of a family unit. Any dominant attitude of rejection of the child’s familial background is commonly passed on to the child, and when cultural and socio-economic backgrounds of families prevent students from performing well, or developing a positive attitude toward their school experience, strong support of home becomes critical if children are to succeed in school (Bardi, 1998; Constable & Walberg, 1988).

Krueger (1994) described the curriculum of the home as the kinds of informed parent-child dialogues about everyday events, the monitoring of television and peer activities, discussions of leisure reading, encouragement, expectations of affection and interest in the child as a person and in his academic achievement. Krueger further asserts that this home curriculum is commonly much more predictive of academic learning than characteristics of, for example, socio-economic status of the family. Constable & Walberg (1988) supported calls for moves toward school interventions aimed at strengthening home-school relationship as such moves create the potential for significant positive effects on students’ learning and behaviour, especially in the early grades. Collaborative efforts between the family and school have the potential for reversing what might otherwise be the inevitable disadvantage of children with EBD (Constable & Walberg, 1998).
The exploration of support in the study was framed within the reviewed literature and organized under the following: (1) Communication of Expectations, (2) Professional Development, (3) Social Work, (4) Motivational Support, and (5) Home-School Partnership

**Methodological Approach**

**Case Study Design**
This study employed a single-case design that was of a descriptive exploratory nature aimed at understanding the kinds of support (if any) provided for Eric’s inclusion and determining how the supports were being used. That was done in terms of listening to the subjective voice of the case, Eric Q, as well as key people who were involved in the education of the student-participant, and who Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) described as “information-rich” (p.56) and who would best assist in fulfilling the purpose of the study.

**Participants**
The researcher needed to select participants from which the most could be learned and needed to explore and understand Eric’s situation. Consequently, purposive sampling was used (Merriam, 2009). Eight participants were involved in the study: Eric Q, one of his parents, his teacher, an assistant teacher assigned to his class, a social worker, two administrators at the school, and a supervisor of a supportive service. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and contingent upon permission from Eric’s mother for his participation in the research during one school term. For the purpose of the study, the researcher divided the participants into three stakeholder groups and the confidentiality of each participant was maintained via a coding system. Table 1 provides a brief description of the three groups and the code assigned to each participant.

**Data Collection Methods**
Data for the study were collected via three methods: a qualitative questionnaire, interviews, and observation of lessons. Questionnaire data were collected from E3, E4, E5, A6, A7, and A8. That instrument was designed to capture the self-expressed beliefs, attitudes, and experiences of participants pertaining to, for example, the provision of professional development and special education services at the participating school, any role of the social worker in addressing challenges experienced in efforts at educating Eric, any partnership between the school and Eric’s home, expectations communicated
Table 1. Description of the Stakeholder Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder group</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Code assigned to participant</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumer</td>
<td>n=2</td>
<td>1. Eric Q</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who used services provided for students having an emotional-behavioural disability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Eric’s parent</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>1. Teacher</td>
<td>E3</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who had expertise and experience in working with EBD students or directly providing some training (specialized or otherwise) in working with Eric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Assistant teacher</td>
<td>E4</td>
<td>The social worker had extensive experience in working with EBD students. The teacher and assistant teacher had no training in special education, nor had they engaged in professional development in educating students with EBD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Social Worker</td>
<td>E5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td>1. Supervisor</td>
<td>A6</td>
<td>This group consisted of participants who had authority and autonomy to make important decisions pertaining to, for example, the organizational provisions at Eric’s school in response to his individual needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. Vice-Principal</td>
<td>A7</td>
<td>The principal and vice-principal had extensive years of service in the teaching profession but had sparse experience with students officially identified as having EBD. The supervisor had extensive experience in coordinating services to both students and their families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. Principal</td>
<td>A8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
regarding teaching students with EBD and, more specifically, teaching Eric, and motivational supports to improve teaching and learning outcomes (with a focus on motivating Eric).

A semantic differential scale was used with Eric (C1). The researcher considered that he was a struggling reader and administered a questionnaire that was not too wordy. The researcher proposed that would be more appealing to C1. That instrument was designed to capture, for example, how Eric felt in class during reading and other tasks, his experience in receiving extra assistance in class, and in getting a reward or praise. The questionnaires were administered over a three-day period and time spent by the respondents ranged from 30 to 52 minutes.

Individual interviews were conducted with the participants over a four-week period. The data generated via the interviews supplemented the questionnaire data. The researcher used semi-structured interview questions focused primarily on understanding what supports (if any) existed at the school for Eric’s inclusion, and how those supports were used. Each interview lasted fifty-five to sixty minutes on average.

Observation data were collected from 12 lessons for a total of approximately 720 minutes of observed teaching in Eric’s classroom. A protocol that incorporated core elements of the reviewed literature guided the observation process. The protocol consisted of two columns containing questions pertaining to specific behaviours and activities, for example, “What is C1’s role during the activities?” “What is C1 doing during a particular activity?” “Is he on or off task?” “Are antecedents and/or consequences used?” Observations allowed the researcher to observe “in the natural field setting” and gain “a first-hand encounter with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam, 2009, p. 94).

**Ethical Considerations**

To minimize the likelihood that the participants would be identified, specific demographic details were withheld. Bogden and Biklen (1998) described researching the personal feelings, experiences, and perspectives of children and others as an intrusive activity that places an onus on the researcher on guaranteeing and maintaining the personal anonymity of the participants. Thus, the name of the site and the class level were not identified, a pseudonym was used for the student, and codes were used to protect the identities of the participants so that the data collected would “not embarrass or in other ways harm them” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 44). The participants were provided with full information about what the study involved, informed that they had the choice to withdraw from the
study at any time, and each participant’s consent was given freely. Permission for Eric’s participation was also obtained from his parent.

**Establishing Credibility and Trustworthiness**

The researcher used member checking as a way to establish credibility and trustworthiness in the study (Creswell, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). That process also allowed participants to spot information that could identify them and, consequently, also served as a protection mechanism that could build trust and enhance data quality. Additionally, triangulation was used as a strategy for further enhancing the validity of the findings (Creswell, 2002; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2011).

**Data Management and Analysis**

At the end of administering each questionnaire, interview, and observation each document was dated and an identification of each participant by the appointed participant code was included. The field notes, artefact contents (from each completed questionnaire), and interviews were transcribed and stored electronically. Significant chunks or segments of each interview, field notes, and questionnaire data were reduced to short phrases (codes) that summarized the basic topic. Then, the researcher moved on to managing the data manually using the cut-and-file technique (Bodgen & Biklen, 1998) to extract and group data chunks with similar codes. Multiple copies of each data set for the purpose of cutting and creating labeled folders according to code names were made. The researcher went through the data and marked each segment to identify its source and page number. Having applied such identification labels, pages of data were cut and placed in appropriate folders to facilitate later data triangulation (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014).

The categorizing process involved looking for threads or recurring commonalities that tied together or linked bits of data. The initial summaries were grouped into themes (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994), and a list of themes from each interview was developed. When reviewing the first set of observations the same steps were followed. The themes that were generated from the three units of analysis namely, feedback from participants’ responses to questionnaire items, one-to-one interview feedback from each of the eight participants, and field notes from observations of classroom instructional practices were triangulated for the purpose of determining convergent evidence (Yin, 2011). That process facilitated the consolidation of understandings and, ultimately, allowed findings to be confirmed.
The Findings

This section reports the findings based on the two objectives of the paper namely to (1) identify the supports present at the participating school, and (2) describe how the supports were being used. For ease of reading, the reader is reminded of the following codes that represent the participants: Eric (C1), Eric’s mother (C2), Teacher-participant (E3), Assistant teacher (E4), Social worker (E5), Supervisor of a service provided to Eric (A6), Vice-principal (A7), and the Principal (A8).

The Kinds of Support for Meaningful Inclusion present at the School

Communication of expectations regarding the teaching of Eric Q

Although A7 and A8 provided oral communication to E3 and E4 of their expectations regarding the delivery of the general education curriculum to all students, the findings indicated there were no communications from A7 and A8 regarding expectations of teaching methods for engaging Eric in reading, nor for working collaboratively with the social worker (E5) to develop an individual plan to treat with Eric’s holistic needs (see Table 2).

Table 2. Communication of Expectations for Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectations</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive written guidelines or policies regarding expectations of</td>
<td>A7 No</td>
<td>E3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching methods/strategies for engaging Eric in reading</td>
<td>A8 No</td>
<td>E4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E5 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive expectations for making sure that a general education</td>
<td>A7 Yes</td>
<td>E3 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>curriculum is being taught.</td>
<td>A8 Yes</td>
<td>E4 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E5 Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive expectations for working collaboratively with others,</td>
<td>A7 No</td>
<td>E3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>such as, Eric's social worker, to develop an individual plan to treat with</td>
<td>A8 No</td>
<td>E4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric’s holistic needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>E5 No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the follow-up interview, E4 shared she was expected to give Eric assistance when needed. E3 reported she was expected to deliver the normal curriculum to all her students. When asked what she meant by “normal”, the participant explained “the primary school curriculum and not a special education curriculum”. Findings showed that what was communicated was that the general education curriculum was expected to be delivered to all students, and the teacher-participants’ responsibility was to deliver that content. There was no evidence of a specific plan at the administrative or classroom level for meeting Eric’s specific needs. The social worker (E5) described using an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with Eric as “an ideal to work towards” and as something that “could be quite helpful...if implemented”. In the absence of an IEP for Eric, E5 offered suggestions to A8 and E3 pertaining to how they should manage Eric’s behaviour at school, and while E5 seemed to expect her suggestions would be implemented, there was no coding for data that indicated her suggestions were adopted at any level in the participating school.

Additionally, E3 and E4 articulated that they did not feel confident in their ability to effectively educate Eric. What emerged as important was an issue of a lack of teacher self-efficacy for interacting with Eric in positive ways and effecting positive learning outcomes. For example, during an interview E3 shared:

\[
\text{I must be provided with the necessary tools to help me meet those expectations set for teaching Eric.} \ldots \ldots \text{While I am expected to teach the contents of the curriculum to all of my students, I don’t feel I have the kinds of skills ... nor the knowledge to deal with Eric’s behaviour and still get him to improve his reading at the same time.} \text{ (E3/Interview)}
\]

**Professional development supports**

The findings showed that professional development supports were provided to the teachers for motivating reluctant readers, differentiating instruction, reading strategies to build comprehension, vocabulary and word recognition skills, and using assessment data to plan for instruction and monitor student progress (see Table 3).

There was no evidence of professional development supports for managing challenging student behaviours. The findings showed that E5 and A6 received professional training in managing the behaviours of EBD students. When asked about the support provided to the school in terms of managing Eric’s behaviour, E5 and A6 reported that the support was provided directly to the student when school visits were made.
### Table 3. Professional Development Supports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional development supports</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on motivating reluctant readers through the use of appropriate resources</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>A 6 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 5 No</td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on differentiating instruction to meet the diverse needs of students</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>A 6 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 5 No</td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on using assessment data to plan for instruction and monitor student progress</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>A 6 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 5 No</td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on reading strategies to build comprehension, vocabulary and word recognition skills</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>A 6 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 5 No</td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive professional development on managing the challenging behaviours of students with EBD</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
<td>A 6 Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
<td>A 7 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 5 Yes</td>
<td>A 8 No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E5 further explained:

*We have so many schools to visit and so many children with serious issues ….. many of them more intense than … (Eric) that we function according to priority. On my last visit, I came because of the calls concerning his fighting. I spoke with his teacher to get the details … but I really don’t tell her how she should manage him in class. (E5/Interview)*
Those statements suggested the presence of particular difficulties such as, numerous schools to visit and the large number of students with special needs, impeded the efficiency of the service offered by E5.

Additionally, factors of negative teacher attitude and feelings of frustration emerged through various statements offered by E3. Those factors were suggested in the statements, “I really don’t feel I am prepared to teach this child (referring to Eric). The things I learn...the strategies and so on, do not help this child (Eric)” (E3/Interview) and again, is suggested in the following:

No amount of professional development could prepare me to teach dis child! Right now, ... Every day is just fighting. I spend more time on dat boy and his nonsense than I do on teaching my students! (E3/Interview)

Motivational supports to the teacher-participants

The questionnaire data provided by A7 and A8 suggested the presence of good motivational supports to E3 and E4. However, E3 and E4 described a different picture (see Table 4).

A7 and A8 reported that they motivated E 3 and E 4 as well as the other teachers on staff by providing additional professional development outside the school, direct feedback to teachers for a job well done, assistance to the teachers in understanding Eric’s (and other students’) issues, help for the teachers to get involved in the planning for what Eric and other students need, and some kind of recognition at staff or PTA meetings. Findings indicated that E3 and E4 believed they had not received any of the motivational supports reported by the two participating administrators.

Motivational supports to students

E 3 and E 4 each indicated that they motivated their students by giving rewards and praise for working well and for good behaviour, allowing each student a turn to be a leader of a group, scaffolding students’ efforts at reading and writing tasks, and conferencing with students to help them understand the importance of setting personal goals and providing positive feedback on performance and improvements (see Table 5).
Table 4. Motivational Supports to Teachers by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational supports</th>
<th>Authority group</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive additional professional development outside the school setting.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive direct feedback for a job well done.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive assistance in understanding Eric's (and other students') issues, so as not to take issues personally.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive help for the planning for what Eric and other students need.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive some kind of recognition at staff or PTA meetings.</td>
<td>A 7 Yes</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A 8 Yes</td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eric reported in his questionnaire that he did not receive praise nor rewards on any occasion. In exploring this issue further, Eric stated in his interview, “I doh get any reward. Miss does give de other children in class but not me” (C1/Interview). When asked about receiving praise at any time, he stated “Dem doh like me. I doh get any praise!” When asked if he felt he deserved praise and why, Eric said, “Yes, even when I get things right ah still doh get any.” I asked Eric if he had ever volunteered to answer a question posed by any of his teachers and if he had been allowed to be the leader in any group in class. He answered “Yes” to the former and “No” to the latter question. Out of the twelve transcripts of classroom practice observation data, there was one instance of coding for praise received by a group in which Eric was a member. There was no instance of coding for praise received directly by Eric. The observation data seemed to support Eric’s perceptions of the non-provision of motivational supports to him.
Table 5. Motivational Supports to Students by Teacher-Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Supports</th>
<th>Expert group</th>
<th>Consumer Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive rewards and praise for working well and for good behaviour.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide each student a turn to be a leader of a group/ I have been allowed a turn to be a leader of a group.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive scaffolding of efforts at reading and writing tasks.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive conferencing to bring about understanding of the importance of setting personal goals.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive positive feedback on performance and improvements.</td>
<td>E 3 Yes</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I provide/receive self-esteem activities to build confidence</td>
<td>E 3 No</td>
<td>C 1 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E 4 No</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were two instances of coding for Eric volunteering to respond, but there were no instances of coding for him being chosen to respond having volunteered. On the first occasion Eric “steupsed” loudly after not being selected by his teacher. The teacher (E3) told him that is not the way to behave in class. Eric responded with another “steups”. On the second occasion (on another visit), after not being selected to respond, Eric placed his head on the desk and did not participate further in the lesson. E3 told him he would have to stand in front of the board at recess time if he did not raise his head off the desk. Eric did not comply. After those two occasions, the observation data did not provide any evidence of further volunteering by the student-participant.
Social work support
Social work was provided by the Students Support Services as a form of direct support to Eric and his family. When asked the primary aim of her interventions with Eric, the social worker (E5) indicated, “It is to teach ... (Eric) how to manage his feeling, particularly his anger, so that he is able to respond more acceptably to conflicts in his life.” When asked about the approach used to accomplish the intervention, E5 reported, “Right now we focus directly on ... (Eric) and his home situation.” When the researcher asked that participant about the extent to which the school was included or supported through their service as stakeholders in Eric’s life, E5 reported:

If you knew how outmatched we are in numbers compared to the large numbers of children in our school system who need our services, you would understand why our service, although we know it is the ideal approach, does not always accommodate a high degree of collaboration with the school. (E5/Interview)

Eric revealed that he liked talking with the social worker. When asked why, he said, “She doesn’t get vex with me. She does listen to me and help me”. When asked to say how the social worker helps him, Eric said, “Ah learning how not to get so angry so fast and to talk to people about how ah feeling instead of hitting”. When asked if he thought he was learning from talking with the social worker, Eric said “Yes”. He added “Ah doh fight as much as ah use to anymore”. Those statements commonly suggested that Eric had a positive perception of the support provided directly to him by the social worker.

Support for building a partnership between the school and Eric’s home
The principal (A8) highlighted the importance of partnering with Eric’s mother. Although that participant reported it was a school policy and a part of their School Development Plan to “build a school culture where all parents feel welcome and can contribute to their children’s education”, there was no evidence to suggest a partnership between Eric’s home and school was present. When asked if Eric’s mother attends PTA meetings or has been invited to serve on a committee, A8 stated, “No, ...we throw out the offer and whether or not they respond is up to them.”

In the follow-up interview of E3, that participant described her relationship with Eric’s mother as “strained!” In exploring the response further, E3 added “She always wants to defend her son’s actions and I have no time to waste in arguing with people who don’t want to take responsibility for their children’s poor behaviour.” When asked about the
school policy for forming a partnership with parents, E3 acknowledged the existence of the policy but stressed, “certain policies look well on paper but are difficult to carry out.”

**How the Supports Were Being Used**

**Communication of expectations**

Findings from questionnaire and interview data showed the communicating of expectations was present at the school as a form of support. For example, in an interview, A7 explained:

> As we try to move forward, we are looking to standardize certain expectations for all teachers. Class time-tables are expected to be put on the wall in each of the classrooms where the teachers will focus on what they plan to do during the block of time they have with the students. This support for the teachers is so that they don’t have to guess what they have to do. (A7/Interview)

Additionally, findings from questionnaire data indicated a consensus was present among A7, A8, E3, and E4 that expectations for ensuring a general education curriculum was being taught. While a system of communicating expectations was in place, there was no evidence, that system was being used to communicate expectations regarding Eric. For example, A7, A8, E3, and E4 commonly attested that no written guidelines or policies regarding expectations of teaching methods or strategies for engaging Eric in reading were provided. Similarly, no expectations for working collaboratively with E5 to develop an individual plan to treat with Eric’s holistic needs were provided.

**Professional development**

There was evidence of the provision of professional development opportunities at the school, but no evidence of professional development opportunities to build teacher-participants’ and the participating administrators’ competencies for more effectively managing students’ challenging behaviours, and, by extension, more effectively interacting with Eric. The support of professional development opportunities organized by the participating administrators was being used to build teacher competency for more effectively delivering the curriculum. Notably, the participants, A7 and A8 reported that even when professional development was provided, there was meagre transference of what was thought of as more effective practices into classroom practice. That was suggested in, for example, the following statements:
Although we try our best to provide professional development, very often there is not enough effort to implement what was done, and so ... not enough, not many of our students, including (Eric) benefit as much as they could from our teachers engaging in such training. (A8/Interview)

Similarly, A7 reported, “We organize the professional development and they attend session after session, but yet still, they go back to class and continue to teach the same ole way!” Both excerpts suggested an issue of a lack of implementation and carried an inference to resistance to change.

**Motivational supports**

There was evidence of the presence of motivational supports in Eric’s classroom. Findings from field notes data supported findings from questionnaire and teacher interview data that praise for working well, good behaviour, and providing students a turn to be a leader of a group was being used by the teacher-participants as scaffolds in the classroom. There was no evidence however, that those scaffolds were being used with Eric.

**Social work support**

A7, A8, E3, and E4 each identified the work of the social worker as a form of support that they had at the school. That support was provided directly to Eric and his mother. Findings suggested that support was being used to equip Eric with skills, to manage in a positive way, the negative emotions he experienced. Eric’s parent (C2) reported that she also communicated with the social worker. She reported, “We talk about how what is happening at home affect Eric.” When asked to further explain, C2 added, “Well, ... the constant fighting and bacchanal does affect his work at school ... We does fight so much!” The social services support received by C2 emerged as a positive factor. That participant reported the support encouraged her to make changes in her lifestyle concerning her relationships and was helping her learn how to better cope with Eric’s behaviour. She reported she was trying to make personal changes at her home, but admitted that that was very difficult.

Findings suggested that in spite of the availability of the service of a social worker, that service was not being used as efficiently as it could be. E3, in discussing how that service was used reported:

> I think more can be accomplished if we work together. Sometimes she (the social worker) visits and I’m not told a thing. She doesn’t
know what I am doing and I don’t know what she is doing. Yes, we do talk but not enough, not often either. (E3/Interview)

That excerpt suggested that E3 believed that greater collaboration between herself, as Eric’s teacher, was needed and that collaboration could be beneficial to Eric.

Support for Building a Partnership between the School and Eric’s Home

There was a written school policy that articulated an aim of the school to build closer school-home relationships. That written policy suggested a value was placed on a positive school-home partnership; a relationship that could make a positive contribution to the development of the students at the participating school. In spite of that written policy, there was no coding that evidenced a positive partnership between Eric’s parent and the school, and more specifically, his teachers.

C2, when asked about her involvement in her son’s school life shared, “I don’t feel welcome there at all!” and added, “They does only call me there to complain!” When asked to describe her relationship with her son’s teacher, C2 responded, “She just like the rest a dem! All a dem is the same!” When explored further, the respondent stated, “I avoid going there.” When asked why, she explained, “I does always leave vex.” When asked if she meets with her son’s teacher privately, C2 stated, “No, we talk right in the classroom.” C2 added “She does tell me about my son in front of the whole class and I does answer she back in front of the whole class!” Those statements suggested Eric’s mother held a negative perception of the school and Eric’s teachers.

Discussion of Major Findings and Implications

This section discusses the major findings in terms of the two objectives of the paper and the literature reviewed. Implications of the findings are presented in terms of the issues that emerged out of how the supports were being used.

Communication of Expectations and Professional Development as Support

Lane et al. (2002) stressed that many teachers are uncertain about how best to serve students with EBD in the general education. From the perspectives of the two administrators who participated in this study, their communication to Eric’s teacher and the assistant teacher pertaining to expectations of support to be provided to Eric Q was clear. However, from
the teachers’ perspectives, while the expectations of the administrators were communicated, they believed they did not possess the required repertoire of skills and knowledge needed to match the expectations of the administrators. Importantly, what emerged for the participating teachers was an issue of a lack of sense of self-efficacy for educating Eric in the general-education classroom.

Trout et al. (2003) highlighted the importance of addressing the concerns and supporting the professional needs of teachers who are expected to educate students with EBD within a system of inclusive education. The issue of teacher-participants’ lack of self-efficacy for meeting Eric’s educational needs carries implications for teacher professional development geared toward bridging existing gaps in their knowledge, skills, and ability to successfully implement pedagogical practices for more effectively interacting with Eric. Whether it is the expectation for one’s job responsibilities, improving Eric’s reading outcomes, or managing his challenging behaviours at school, it is important that Eric’s teachers not only have clarity about their role as educators, but the tools for meeting those expectations must be provided.

The teachers working with Eric, not unlike many teachers working with behaviourally challenging students, felt defeated, frustrated, and overwhelmed (Wagner et al., 2005). Inclusive education has often placed an emphasis on physical placements and treating with affective components regarding the EBD student with neglect of other aspects of the educational process (Hegarty, 2001; Stockall & Gartin, 2002; Voltz et al., 2001). While meeting the physical and affective needs of at-risk students is vital, not much emphasis has been placed on meeting the affective and professional needs of local, and perhaps other teachers within the wider Caribbean who play a direct role in inclusive education. That lack of attention may be viewed as a neglected aspect of the educational process and bears implications not only for on-going teacher professional development, but what is offered to all teachers as part of teacher training programmes.

**Motivation as Support**

In this study, the school administrators indicated that they were making an effort to motivate Eric’s teachers. Those teachers, in turn, indicated they were making an effort to provide motivational support to Eric. Teachers working with EBD students need ongoing motivational supports that transcend the typical supports for teachers of students without EBD (Alderman, 2004; Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Having to treat with challenging behaviours that are complex, and confusing can daunt a
teacher’s ability to effectively educate students with EBD. The participating administrators did not seem to have a clear understanding of what it takes to motivate the teachers who directly interacted with Eric nor the importance of not just providing that support but ensuring that it was ongoing and consistent.

Fulfilling their motivational role for any of their students, places an onus on developing competencies in pro-active decision-making skills (Alderman, 2004). Motivation is situational and contextual, and teachers of students with or without EBD who understand the importance of actively planning how to motivate their students, and not giving reactionary responses to problems as they occur, commonly realize rewarding results. The teacher-participants provided students with a mixture of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivators. However, much more effort is needed in not only providing this support to Eric Q, but in maintaining the effort. Managing Eric’s behaviour and effecting higher learning outcomes is a challenge that carries an implication for the direct provision of motivational supports to that student, and, by extension, other at-risk students who have found a place in the general education classroom.

Social work as Support

McKinnon et al. (2001) contend that the child and the structure of his relationships outside school has a marked influence on his performance in the classroom, hence the need for coordinated and comprehensive services to the child and his family through social work services. Hare (1988) and McKinnon et al. advise a broad-based team approach that embraces the chief stakeholders, children, along with general classroom teachers, special educators, administrators, parents, support services staff, as necessary for successful implementation of best practices for students with EBD. Eric Q and certain members of his family received services of a social worker. However, the data in this study could not support any claim of a presence of the kind of broad-based approach advised by McKinnon and colleagues.

That broad-based approach is the kind of socio-ecological approach that allows the social worker greater capacity in working toward the development of the child’s personal control over his own life through improving the quality of interactions between the child, and his or her particular social environment (Frey & Nichols, 2003). The social work support seemed to rest primarily on Eric and his home. The common perspective of the teacher-participants that any social work intervention aimed at helping Eric develop control over his own life should more
Educating Eric Q

effectively embrace them is significant because they play an important role in Eric’s social context. Perhaps if the difficulties expressed by the social worker are overcome, then the kinds of broad-based approach advised by Frey and Nichols can be more readily facilitated.

**Partnership Between the School and Eric’s Home as Support**

Parents of children with EBD who are being educated in a system of inclusion commonly report they do not feel their role as a collaborative partner is encouraged by the school (Constable & Walberg, 1988; Krueger, 1994. Building positive relationships, whether between the teacher and parent, or the student and parent, is a crucial step to establishing a strong home-school partnership. In spite of the presence of a school policy that articulated a value placed on fostering a higher quality of partnership with parents, it was clear that Eric’s mother did not buy into the notion that she was welcomed or valued by the school. What was articulated by that parent was more aligned to a perception of disenfranchisement from the school than a sense of belonging. Such negative parent perception of the school carries an implication for more effective communication which is central to beginning and nurturing the process of cultivating a positive home-school connection. Perhaps Eric’s parent and teachers can decide at the start of every school year how they will facilitate clear and informative two-way communication. The existing structures at the participating school and other schools, such as the PTA and school committees where parents are members, can provide a foundation for reducing deterrents to involving Eric’s mother and other parents, and nurturing a more amicable partnership. Successful inclusion, for Eric and others may require positive changes or shifts in the attitudes and beliefs of school administrators, parents, teachers, and other stakeholders; changes that reflect they truly believe that students with EBD and other disabilities can successfully be educated in the general education classroom.

**Conclusion**

There is a tremendous amount of work and effort that needs to occur for the meaningful inclusion of Eric at the school and this should be a broad-based effort by all stakeholders in Eric’s ecological system. Taken separately, supports such as professional development, social work services, motivation, and a positive home-school collaborative effort can have a positive impact on the quality of education that Eric Q and other EBD students receive. However, when those supports are adopted as part of a cohesive and comprehensive approach within a system of inclusive
education, it is possible that attaining more favourable education outcomes can more effectively be accomplished. As Trinidad and Tobago strives to make inclusive education a part of the local education landscape, providing the necessary supports and developing policies that articulate how those supports are expected to be used are a sine qua non for successful inclusive education.

References


THE COMPETENCIES OF NEWLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO ENGAGE IN INCLUSIVE PRACTICES AT THE PRIMARY LEVEL

Leela Ramsook and Marlene Thomas

Hundreds of teachers have graduated with a Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) degree from the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT) since 2010 and are currently employed at primary schools across Trinidad and Tobago. The purpose of the study was to determine whether Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) believed that they acquired the competencies to engage in inclusive practices. It also sought to investigate how NQTs implement inclusive practices, and to unearth their experiences. A mixed method approach was adopted using purposive sampling with one hundred and twenty NQTs. Data collection procedures included questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with focus groups and reflective writing. Data were analysed using an integration of quantitative and qualitative procedures. The results indicate that NQTs believe that they have developed the competencies to engage in inclusive practices, and they implement inclusive practices by using a variety of teaching/learning strategies. The experiences of NQTs are encapsulated in four major themes. However, participants complained that they face major challenges. It can be concluded that there should be support, resources and a digitized forum for teachers to share best practices. This research has implications for the review of the B. Ed. programme at UTT, other higher education institutions, and for the teacher education in general.

Introduction

Background of the Study

In July 2006, there was a major pedagogical shift in teacher education in Trinidad and Tobago. The last cohort of teacher trainees graduated from the two existing teachers’ colleges (Valsayn and Corinth) which were
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subsequently closed and the Ministry of Education (MOE) relinquished its governance on teacher education.Teacher education made its transition to a tertiary institution, a newly established local university, the University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), which offers a four-year degree programme in its Centre for Education Programme (CEP). This initiative was part of a major thrust of education reform as articulated in the Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 (MOE, 1992) and emphasized in the Strategic Plan, 2002-2006 (MOE, 2002).

Recently, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has reiterated its commitment to meet the needs of diverse learners. In reporting on the action to be taken to address the performance of the nation’s children in the school system, the Government has stipulated that there is a need “to transform our teaching and learning strategies to address the diverse backgrounds, aptitudes and learning styles to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to succeed” (MOE 2012, p. v). According to this education plan, the recommendation by the Ministry of Education is to adopt a student-centred approach towards the development of the education system in Trinidad and Tobago.

The focus of the MOE therefore, is to maintain, mainstream, inclusive classrooms to promote equality and equity under the same umbrella. Hundreds of newly qualified teachers (NQTs) who have graduated from the University are currently employed and entrusted with this task at primary schools across the country. An examination of the competencies of NQTs to engage in inclusive practices in the delivery of quality education for every student is therefore a justified study.

Significance of the Study

Meeting the needs of diverse learners at primary level requires a wide range of teacher competencies to be developed in teachers through pre-service education. Failure to do so would be detrimental to the school and to society, thus, it is necessary to find out from those who interface with the schools to determine the gaps to be closed and the needs to be met. The pre-service teachers who have experienced and graduated from the programme at UTT, have made their transition into the primary schools as NQTs. They are strategically placed as key stakeholders to meet the needs of all learners, in particular those learners who are deemed ‘at risk’ because they have special needs. The Education Policy Paper 1993-2003 espouses, “Mainstreaming of children with special needs except for severe cases will be the norm” (MOE, 1992, p. 12), while the MOE outlines, “Inclusive: We expect all students will learn in a welcoming environment,
regardless of place, culture or learning needs” (MOE, 2012, p. xi), as a guiding principle for educators.

The Strategic Plan, 2002- 2006 outlines the MOE’s vision to be “... a pacesetter in the holistic development of an individual through an education system which enables meaningful contributions within the global context” (MOE, 2002, p. 31). Underpinning this vision is the philosophical tenet that “Every child has an inherent right to an education which the development of maximum capability will enhance regardless of gender, ethnic, economic, social or religious background” (MOE, 2002, p. 31). Guided by the vision projected by this plan, the need arises to investigate the how NQTs implement inclusive practices.

Theoretical Framework
This study is informed by various theories including, andragogy as proffered by Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) and constructivism as participants construct their own meaning, interpretations and experiences. Also, Vygotsky’s (1978) social development theory, Gardner’s (1995) theory of multiple intelligences and Carol Ann Tomlinson’s (2005) theory on differentiated instruction underpin the research as they inform teaching and learning.

Literature Review
Inclusivity
Amidst a multiplicity of definitions and conceptualizations advanced for inclusive education, the one outlined by Thousand and Villa, (2000) as “welcoming, valuing and supporting the diverse learning needs of all students in shared general education environments” (p. 73), was considered in this study but the broader developing concept of inclusivity was also addressed. An analysis of the discourse on inclusive education reveals that the concept of inclusion transcends the original idea of including children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Mainstreaming refers to the inclusion of special students in the general education process ... gifted and talented individuals, students from culturally and diverse backgrounds, and students at risk for school failure (Lewis & Doorlag, (2011). In their extensive research on special education O’Gorman and Drudy (2011) skilfully traced the changing concept of special education from a medical model to a social model. This revised model recognizes diversity and uniqueness in individuals and also establishes that the school has the responsibility to address and accommodate these needs.
The philosophy behind inclusivity is that all students should be educated and given equal opportunities as their peers in mainstream classrooms. Teachers acknowledge, appreciate, and respect students' varied talents, skills, abilities, interests, backgrounds and intelligences (Navarro, Zervas, Gesa & Sampson, 2016). But, Cain (2012) lamented “the lasting impact that childhood experiences both in school and in the home could have on an individual’s beliefs about teaching, learning and schooling in general” (p.103).

Many of today's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse, which holds true for primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. As such, the role of the teacher becomes more significant. It is therefore incumbent on teachers to enhance and broaden their working knowledge of special needs and to develop skills and competencies to address the special needs of children in schools. This shift in thinking in meeting the needs of special children in the mainstream classroom will also require a rethinking of the teacher’s role, as well as their preparation for teaching.

In the B. Ed. programme offered at the UTT, the training that NQTs received was designed to empower them with the skills and competencies to practice inclusive education. However, it is realistic to expect that the NQTs may encounter challenges in the implementation of inclusive practices (Lavia, 2008) in their respective classrooms. Hodkinson (2005), of the University of Chester, in his exploration of the understanding and knowledge base of NQTs, suggested that many of the barriers to implementation resided within the schools themselves. Clough and Garner (as cited in Hodkinson, 2005) reported that inclusivity became problematic in educational institutions because of a lack of thorough understanding of implementation practices for inclusive education, whilst Corbett (2001) reported a lack of proper training as a major problem. According to Hodkinson (2005), a significant concern is that NQTs do not apply the same understanding of inclusive education.

However, McMillan (2008), in her studies on inclusive education, reported on the success of inclusive practices. A significant finding was that inclusive practices yielded academic as well as social benefits. But she found that such inclusive practices are more likely to be successful when there was cooperation among colleagues.

**UTT Training – B.Ed. programme**

UTT offers a comprehensive programme with a number of pedagogical courses to provide students with the skills to implement a variety of approaches to make education available to all learners in the primary school. UTT has attempted to equip students with the skills to make
inclusivity a reality in tandem with the 1994 Salamanca Statement and international support for full inclusion (UNESCO, 2009). When classrooms are transformed into an inclusive system, students are better poised to develop cognitively, socially and emotionally. Implementing a variety of student-centred approaches is one of the key components to making this process of development a reality.

The courses UTT presents incorporate in-house sessions with simulated activities that allow students to be involved in hands-on and vicarious experiences. These are converted into real-life classroom situations during the practicum which form a critical component of training every semester. When students engage in field practice in schools they are also mentored by UTT instructors as well as cooperating teachers and administrators to embrace inclusivity. NQTs therefore learn to integrate pedagogical content knowledge, that is, “subject matter for teaching . . . content most germane to its teachability” (Shulman, 1986, p. 9) and procedural knowledge (or how to teach) to enhance their skills and competencies for inclusive classrooms. The expectations are, therefore, that NQTs are empowered to embrace the challenges of an inclusive classroom.

**Multi-Modal Instruction**

In inclusive classrooms teachers implement a variety of instructional strategies to cater for diverse learners. For example, with tiered instruction they maximize learning opportunities for the slow, remedial, average and gifted students. They use multiple modalities to cater for different learning styles including, visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic (Lenz, Deshler, & Kissam, 2004; Tomlinson, 2001). With the use of multiple modalities students process information better (Wood, 2006), and are more creative in problem solving as there is appeal to different senses (Swanson, Solis, Ciullo & McKenna, 2012). There is the enhancement of different skills, experiences and motivation through oral presentations, cooperative learning and the use of technology. McKenna, Shin and Ciullo (2015) note,

> Within a structured class, teachers systematically delivered mathematics lessons using specific procedures—introducing objectives, reviewing previously learned concepts, modelling new skills, and providing guided and independent practice. Through this method . . . teachers applied procedure-based mathematics instruction to support students with LD [learning difficulties]. (p. 8)

**A Community of Support**
Inclusion is also about engendering a sense of community, belonging and encouragement from administrators, family, and professionals. The family as a collaborative partner (Salend, 2011; Skrtic, 1991; Wood, 2006) also enables a palatable learning environment (Choate, 2004). According to Wood (2006) “Collaboration requires effective communication” (p. 30) among all stakeholders, especially parents. “Among the most sweeping changes taking place in our schools is the redefinition of teacher roles and responsibilities” (Choate, 2004, p. 15) and some teachers are willing to “adopt an individualized working style, focused on the child's needs” (Blândul & Bradea, 2017, p. 337). Also, educators collaborate to minimize curricular barriers and proactively solve emerging problems (Heacox, 2002; Thwala, 2015). But collegial support, sharing ideas and resources, are also essential for successful implementation of inclusive practices.

Inclusive Practice – The dilemma
Teacher attitudes and beliefs about inclusive practices may impact negatively on inclusivity. While many educators have bought into the philosophy of inclusion, some advocate individualized programmes for challenged students. In a study conducted in Swaziland, Thwala (2015) found that teacher stress and their inability to deal with new responsibilities impacted negatively on inclusive practices. In addition, a study on the impact of inclusion on teachers by Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro and Peck (1995) revealed mixed results.

Also, students’ behaviours such as truancy and indiscipline may constrain teachers’ motivation for inclusivity. In a study done in the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, Bergsma (2000) found that for inclusive education, the powers that be have fewer ideas with respect to policy development and implementation when it comes to the school system and the micro level . . . principals, teachers, pupils, and parents and guardians get lost, and the “at-risk” children start to lose their battle with the mainstream (p. 29). Sands, Kozleski and French (2000) note that educational changes are unrelenting and overwhelming and, often, at cross purposes, while Skrtic (1991) argues that the inclusion debate will be amplified in the twenty-first century.

Purpose of the Study
The primary objective of this study was to investigate whether NQTs from the University of Trinidad and Tobago believed that they acquired the knowledge, skills and competencies to engage in inclusive practices to ensure that every student learns. In addition, the research focused on how
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the NQTs are implementing inclusive practices to meet the needs of diverse learners at the primary level and it also sought to determine the experiences of NQTs in the implementation of inclusive practices in their classes.

Research Questions

1. Do NQTs from the UTT believe that they are equipped with the necessary competencies to engage in inclusive practices at the primary level?
2. How do NQTs from the UTT implement inclusive practices in their classes?
3. What are the experiences of NQTs in implementing inclusive practices?

Sample

The sample involved 24 schools, two of which were from Tobago, with a total of 120 NQTs from the University of Trinidad and Tobago. The participants successfully completed a four-year Bachelor of Education programme at the institution. The NQTs are currently employed as teachers by the MOE in primary schools where they teach at different levels. They serve in government, denominational and private primary/elementary schools located in several educational districts in Trinidad and Tobago.

The major commonality, however, is that all participants graduated from UTT. They were exposed to a synthesis of the same pedagogical content knowledge, instructional methods and assessment procedures. An established standard was upheld by UTT by conforming to all standards, all validation requirements and also by being fully accredited, on par with other universities in the region.

Data Collection Methods

In this study, a mixed method approach was utilized to investigate the beliefs of NQTs about their competencies, the implementation strategies they use and their classroom experiences with inclusive practices at primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. A mixed analysis involves using quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques within the same study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011).

A questionnaire with both open and closed ended questions was used. This was administered to 120 NQTs, UTT graduates, who are currently
teaching at primary schools in Trinidad and Tobago. The instrument was pilot tested to determine the suitability of the questions, some of which had to be modified based on feedback.

Face to face semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 focus groups. Each group was asked the same questions to maintain consistency of the data analysis. All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim to establish credibility and accuracy of the data. The transcripts were returned to participants for checking, which allowed for authenticity of data.

Participants were also asked to engage in ongoing reflective writings which included some of their experiences and how they implement inclusive practices in their respective classes. The different data gathering methods using questionnaires, semi-structured focus group interviews and written reflections, allowed for validation and triangulation of data. Participants were advised about voluntary participation, confidentiality of data and anonymity from inception. Interviewees were also reminded that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from study at any time.

Data Analysis

In this study quantifiable data were analysed using descriptive statistics to provide a synthesis of the information. The findings were corroborated with the data derived from the qualitative analysis to establish congruency and “increase understanding of the underlying phenomenon” (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2011, p.1). The qualitative data analysis procedure outlined by Creswell (2012) was adapted and utilized for “complementarity i.e., results from one analysis type [e.g., qualitative] are interpreted to enhance, expand, illustrate, or clarify findings derived from the other strand [quantitative]” (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, p. 4).

The data were read reiteratively (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014) and compared to establish patterns as well as determine outliers. Data analysed from questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with focus groups and reflective writings formed a crystallization of codes, categories and themes.

Results

The data revealed that 81% of the respondents believe that they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and competencies to engage in inclusive practices at the primary level. Fifteen percent found that they
were prepared for the “ideal” classroom while another 4% disclosed that they were not well prepared. The latter cited personal concerns such as lack of effective communication skills and problems with classroom management which they believed curtailed their proficiency. A summary of the data is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Beliefs About Competencies for Inclusive Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beliefs</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipped with Competencies</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepared for ‘Ideal’ Classroom</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Well Prepared</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data on the implementation of inclusive practices demonstrate that the NQTs implement inclusive practices on a regular/daily basis by using various teaching methodologies. A total of 108 participants reported that they use cooperative learning regularly while 97 outlined that they differentiated instruction in terms of content, process and product. Eighty-four participants used tiered learning for instruction, aligning the complexity of the content to the learning readiness and previous knowledge of the students. Seventy-six NQTs also identified inquiry-based learning and 75 outlined peer tutoring as strategies they used to cater for diverse needs of students. Table 2 gives a summary of the data.

Table 2. Some Inclusive Strategies Implemented by NQTs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Total No. of NQTs (120)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative Learning</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differentiated learning</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiered learning</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inquiry-based learning</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer tutoring</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NQTs used the following methods on a more limited basis: theme-based learning, scenario-based learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, games and simulations as well as activities involving the use of technology.

As shown in Table 3, 27% cited the lack of administrative support as the reason for limited implementation while 47% complained about the lack of resources. Nine percent bemoaned a lack of collegial support; 12% lamented that the culture of the school was a mitigating factor, while 5% felt that they lacked confidence to implement inclusive practices.
Table 3. Reasons for Non-implementation of Inclusive Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Implementation Reasons</th>
<th>Percentages (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Administrative support</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of collegial support</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture of the school</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Confidence</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes that emanated about experiences of NQTs from the qualitative data, that is, eleven focus group interviews and reflective writings, include: (1) Proficiency, (2) Gratitude for Practicum and Practice, (3) Student Centred Strategies, and (4) Refining Techniques despite Challenges. The anecdotal statements below were selected based on the collective agreement of members of the focus groups. Eleven groups were included because of varied demographics.

Focus Group 1.

*UTT has equipped me with the professional skills. I enjoy the challenge . . . I need to go out there and be the best teacher in a diverse class . . . differentiating instruction, bringing our real-life examples, for example when I am teaching ratios, I tell the children about cooking, cooking involves ratio . . . UTT gave us the privilege to go out in the schools and practise and I practise what was taught to us, so I have the skills.*

Focus Group 2.

*Field teaching is tedious . . . difficult but the experience gave me practice . . . the experience in the teaching field benefitted me the most . . . I could handle any class . . . my cooperating teachers said they like my confidence . . . there are problems . . . but I feel ready.*

Focus Group 3

*I think I am competent enough to go into the classroom and teach all the topics . . . I teach each of them (students) in the way they understand and help them to understand and I assist in any way I can . . . I do research . . . I have to do oral assessment sometimes.*

Focus Group 4
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UTT made us spend a lot of time on lesson planning . . . that was real tough . . . I learn to plan, and with the practical teaching I developed the skills . . . I am catering for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Focus Group 5
My experience was confusing at first . . . but practicum after practicum, year after year made me into a teacher, a very skilled teacher. I use cooperative learning, games and other methods.

Focus Group 6
Challenging . . . but if you give the proper attention to the students, they learn and respect you . . . if you are always behind that child and you keep supporting that child he will learn . . . you have to show the students different ways to solve problems . . . I learnt different ways in UTT and I put them into practice.

Focus Group 7
Yes and no, it really prepares you for the ideal classroom but I use a lot of manipulatives and strategies . . . previous knowledge is very important because you cannot go to a classroom and start teaching if the children don’t have the previous knowledge . . . the fact of the matter is that it is ‘trying’ but I get every child to learn even if it is one sentence or to solve one problem.

Focus Group 8
The class is crowded, and it is really hard to find activities but I try to make learning meaningful for each child in my class . . . I used the technology . . . it was fun because they like the games . . . but I had to facilitate with my laptop . . . but I have to work on my communication skills.

Focus Group 9
I break down the content and focus on student understanding . . . practicum was difficult, but I am a better teacher. UTT has done all it can to equip me to be able to effectively manage diverse learners in classrooms.

Focus Group 10
It is still an issue in my mind, but I am learning to deal with it more and more by practising every day . . . I used cooperative
learning so every child was involved . . . but it was difficult, we barely had space to walk through the class.

Focus Group 11
I have developed the competency . . . but classroom management . . . I implement different methods like grouping the children . . . but I tell you classroom management . . . I feel a little embarrassed . . . I tell you my classroom management is really a huge problem.

Reflective Writing A
There are at least three children with serious learning disabilities. However, I have made a plan for assisting them with their learning problems. I have discussed the plan with the principal . . . I believe that I do possess the necessary skills to deal with the problems.

Reflective Writing B
I do make an effort to enhance my teaching methods on a daily basis. I think my students are now more interested in their work. I do have students with reading problems . . . I have grouped the children in such a way that peer learning is possible . . . I realize that I have the skills. I just need to plan and make a conscious effort to implement more student-centered approaches.

Reflective Writing C
I use student centered approaches and I do make and use resources, especially manipulatives in the teaching of Mathematics. I will admit that it is difficult to be creative all day long and there are times that I drift into the traditional methods. . . . but I will admit that the students are more interested when I employ a variety of teaching strategies. I think that I do have knowledge of the skills to be employed in meeting the needs of the diverse learners in my classroom and I do implement them regularly.

Discussion
The results revealed that NQTs believe that they possess skills and competencies to deal with the diverse needs of learners at the primary level. The majority of teachers indicated that they have developed the confidence based on practical experiences in the classroom during practicum throughout their tenure at UTT. While they have given full
credit to UTT some have mentioned the input of cooperating teachers and the role they played as mentors.

Participants believe that their experiences have been fulfilling and satisfying when they engaged in inclusive practices. NQTs provide a supportive, student friendly environment and use a variety of activities to enhance students' learning. However, they experience challenges and difficulties which are discouraging, even leading to frustration, confusion, anxiety. They bewail that there are classrooms that are not conducive to learning as well as an acute lack of resources and collegial support in the schools. “It is not uncommon for teaching staff to complain that they do not have appropriate time and resources available to them to effectively carry about such collaboration” (Rix, 2005, p. 134).

NQTs believe that devising creative ways of engaging in inclusive practices becomes tedious and time consuming especially because they are faced with a content loaded curricula. The structure of national assessments together with teacher responsibility to enhance students’ ability to pass examinations impact on the frequency and quality of inclusive practices particularly at the upper levels. In addition, pressures from parents, administrators and school-supervisors, who have a traditionalist philosophy, may be demotivating for NQTs.

The NQTs disclosed that in addition to traditional methods such as discussion, they used constructivist student-centred approaches to teaching and learning. By implementing cooperative learning, for example, NQTs were able to engage students in structured activities, where there was teamwork incorporating positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation and simultaneous interaction (Kagan, 1994).

Tiered learning provided appropriate opportunities for the remedial learners and sufficient challenge for gifted, advanced learners (Vygotsky, 1978). Peer tutoring also allowed students to work collaboratively, give and receive feedback, accept responsibility and evaluate their own learning. The main focus of inquiry-based learning was to provide opportunities for questioning, problem solving and creative thinking. The strategies NQTs employed demand astute planning and organization for effective implementation. Therefore, NQTs demonstrated a passion for teaching as well as commitment and dedication to ensure that no child is left behind. NQTs indicated that they incorporated varied activities using technology with videos, games and simulations. However, they found it time consuming and difficult to deal with the associated technological problems. By the use of varied interactive, student-centred methods and activities, in different subject areas, NQTs practised inclusivity as well as
catered for the different learning styles and the holistic development of the students.

The participants attributed their confidence and proficiency in the execution of the strategies and activities to the hands-on, experiential practice they received as part of their training at the UTT. They expressed gratitude for the practice during their practicum mandated by UTT. However, they acknowledged that they are still refining their pedagogical skills and are willing to continue to “perfect” them. NQTs are also aware that continuous self-learning is an essential benchmark for continuity towards successful inclusivity. Holdsworth (2005) notes, “It is the experimentation and the ability to reflect about the needs of children, about their varied strengths and weaknesses, about the choices in methodology, and how to maximize the potential of all children that make for inclusive styles” (p. 131).

While no one outlined the term differentiated instruction, some participants mentioned that they simplified content into sub-components (whereby they differentiated content), utilized multiple teaching strategies such as cooperative learning (process differentiation), and used different modes of assessment such as oral presentations (product differentiation) (Joseph, Thomas, Simonette, & Ramsook, 2013). NQTs adopted differentiated instruction by continuously adjusting instruction so that the needs of all students were met. When there is differentiated learning, all students make accelerated progress (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2007; Tomlinson, 2005).

The terminology tiered learning did not arise but some respondents revealed that they devised activities so that students may work at different levels of complexity to accomplish the same task. Efforts were made to scaffold students to their next level of learning. By adopting interactive approaches NQTs ensured that all students, including the average, slow and remedial, learnt fundamental concepts and skills. The gifted learner was also taken into account with the provision of enrichment exercises and opportunities for independent learning. This suggests that students’ developmental stages and maturational levels were also taken into account.

NQTs recognized the importance of previous knowledge and the concepts of going from the known to the unknown, simple to complex, concrete to abstract and the use of symbolic, enactive and iconic representations. Lewis and Doorlag (1995) advise teachers to “Break the learning tasks into teachable sub-components” (p. 98). They used realia, manipulatives and real-life examples so that concepts were explicit, meaningful and culturally relevant.
However, NQTs indicated that the inclusive classroom is very challenging and sometimes the daily school routine is so overwhelming that in order to survive they are forced to revert to traditional methods of rote learning or catering for the average learner. They recognize that there are no quick fixes; that they are plagued with multiple problems such as lack of resources and sometimes the systemic problems repress their targeted goals and objectives to engage in inclusive practices. Skrtic (1991) argues that teachers are constrained by the machine bureaucracies of the school.

Some NQTs lamented that they felt discouraged as the culture of the schools mitigated against their inclusive practices. While some were deterred, others made proactive interventions which encouraged at least one principal to buy into the practice. NQTs outlined that a collaborative approach among staff members is minimal if not obstructionist. Other NQTs have attributed their limitations to personal factors such as self-esteem, confidence, and inability to manage classes properly and to communicate effectively. Only one NQT enunciated that a collaborative effort was forged among the staff, heads of departments and the principal in a particular school for the promotion of inclusivity.

In summary, researchers such as Tomlinson (2005), and McKenna, Shin and Ciullo (2015) observe that teacher-belief in inclusivity is an investment in education. NQTs reported that inclusion is amenable in that they believe in their competence and that UTT has equipped them to engage in, adapt and implement inclusive practices. They also reiterated that their experiences convey that inclusivity is beneficial to all students. In spite of these indicators, they claim that they are plagued with many challenges which can serve as deterrents to best practice.

**Conclusion**

All stakeholders benefit from inclusive education. When NQTs practise inclusion, they feel a sense of accomplishment. Students are motivated and learning becomes fun. The NQTs from UTT demonstrate high levels of efficacy and proficiency in catering for the needs of every child but they acknowledge that they are still developing their skills. While there are mitigating factors such as the culture of the schools, students’ indiscipline and lack of support from other educators, greater collaboration must be forged between the University, teachers, the MOE and other stakeholders. Perhaps the inclusion of a course in counselling offered by UTT as well as other higher educational institutions, or piloted by the MOE will enhance the skills of NQTs in engaging in inclusive practices. Also, professional support for NQTs should be provided for teachers and an evaluation unit
with capacity for referral should be established by the MOE to determine the severity of students’ problems. The unit should be well integrated for monitoring purposes. Additionally, a digitized/virtual forum for teachers whereby successful practices and solutions of new and emerging problems can be shared and will add a new dimension to enable teachers and create an environment for inclusion in today’s globally challenging, competitive society.

**Recommendations**

This investigation into how NQTs cater for inclusivity may generate interest for future studies into inclusive practices throughout Trinidad and Tobago. It may spark interest into the functionality of the Student Support Services of the MOE as an integral part of the education system. Many administrators need to be sensitized to improved practices and into the philosophy of inclusion. Such a movement should also contribute to the re-engineering of the culture of schools where inclusive practices are not encouraged. Such a move may contribute considerably to the aspiration of the Government to transform the education system to ensure that all students are given equal opportunities to succeed.

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