
ETD Archive

2012

Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy Education

Carmine Stewart
Cleveland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive>

 Part of the [Education Commons](#)

How does access to this work benefit you? Let us know!

Recommended Citation

Stewart, Carmine, "Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy Education" (2012). *ETD Archive*. 282.
<https://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/etdarchive/282>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by EngagedScholarship@CSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in ETD Archive by an authorized administrator of EngagedScholarship@CSU. For more information, please contact library.es@csuohio.edu.

TEACHER PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADULT
LITERACY EDUCATION
CARMINE STEWART

Bachelor of Science in Education
Eastern Michigan University
August, 1995

Master of Urban Planning, Design, and Development
Cleveland State University
May, 1999

submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
at
CLEVELAND STATE UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 2012

© COPYRIGHT BY CARMINE STEWART 2012

**This dissertation has been approved
for the Department of EDUCATION
and the College of Graduate Studies by**

Dissertation Co-Chairperson, Jonathan E. Messemer, Ed.D.

CASAL, August, 2012

Dissertation Co-Chairperson, Joanne Goodell, Ph.D.

Teacher Education, August, 2012

Brian E. Harper, Ph. D.

Curriculum and Foundations, August, 2012

Tachelle I. Banks, Ph.D.

Teacher Education, August, 2012

Cristine Smith, Ed. D.

International Education, August, 2012

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work, with love, to my family, for filling my entire life with love and encouragement.

My parents, Donald and Carmine Stewart (without whom neither I, nor this work, would be possible) certainly deserve top billing. You made me believe from a very early age that I could do anything. Your belief carries me when my own belief falters. Your love and support is immeasurable, and greatly appreciated. I could not have accomplished any of this without you.

My daughter, Azariah, who has inspired, loved, and supported me throughout the dissertation journey. You were my main motivation for even pursuing this degree. I wanted you to see what a woman can accomplish when she makes up her mind! Your words of encouragement when things got really rough sustained me. What you sacrificed for me to earn this degree.....I promise to pay it all back.

My brothers Ace and Desi, my brother Romelle, and my sister-in-love Lisa have contributed so much to helping me to develop personal strength. Ace, you have been my biggest supporter when it comes to educational pursuits. Thank you for always believing in me. Romelle, Desi and Lisa, thank you for your continued prayers, love, and support. Thank you also for my nieces and my nephew, Kynneddy, Desi Jr, and Brooklyn. Their love, hugs, and kisses were a healing balm when the journey got rough.

My aunts, uncles, grandparents and cousins, whose expectations of excellence continue to push me beyond my limits. Uncle Fred, thanks for reminding me that I'm.....you know.

To adult literacy students, and adult literacy educators everywhere....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My journey into the field of adult literacy began because three women, Louisa Oliver, Terry Moore, and Ellen Barrett from the Heights Parent Center thought of me (a former volunteer and part time staff member) when they needed a GED teacher. They set me on a course to discover my passion and purpose in life, and I will be forever grateful for that.

Many thanks to my faculty members and committee members, for the hours, days, weeks, months, and years spent guiding, challenging, and directing me. I have to acknowledge the enormous contribution of my Co-chair and Methodologist, Dr. Joanne Goodell, whose questions helped me to focus my research, and whose feedback from start to finish was invaluable. Thank you for making me feel like a top priority among a million priorities, and for pushing me through in this last year. Dr. Brian Harper who was the first professor I had in the program, served on my dissertation committee, and conducted crisis intervention in the years between; I thank you. Your ability to redirect my entire thought process by asking just one question still astounds me. Dr. Anne Galletta introduced me to participatory methods of inquiry, contributed much to my choice of methodology and to my development as a scholar. Dr. Cristine Smith provided a wonderful research basis, and sage advice on how to conduct my focus groups. Dr. Graham Stead and Joshua Bagaka's, who served as Directors of the Program and, Dr. Frank Aquila; all three of these men challenged me to focus on the relevance of my study, and to think about what I wanted to contribute to the body of research.

I have to thank Wanda Pruett-Butler. You are so much more than the Program Assistant to those of us who enter this program. Wanda knows the protocol, and the

“who-to-call,” and keeps us all in line and out of trouble, always with the cheeriest disposition. Your assistance, guidance, and quiet assurances mean more than you know.

I also have to thank my siblings from Cohort XXII, especially Dr. Jessie Guidry Baginski and Dr. Sashelle Thomas Alexander, my unofficial committee members. Your time, your tips, your critique, your friendship: priceless. Craig and Glenda Cotner, and Christopher E. Lewis, your encouragement has meant so much. I’d be remiss if I failed to acknowledge vanessa jones (my sister in the struggle), Norina Columbaro, Andrea Moss, Rosary Kennedy, and Leslie Cohen, who have all provided guidance and support along the way.

I must also thank Jonathan Berry for his love, support, and friendship through the years, particularly in the last few, stressful months of writing and editing. Thank you for providing safe space, physical and mental, and for helping me to maintain the proper perspective. Thank you also for bringing the world’s greatest study buddy, Abbey Gail Berry, into my life.

My supporters in the world of literacy, especially Omobola Lana, Jeff Gove, Christine Lee, Meagen Farrell Howe, Robin Peterson, Daniel Davila, Diana Levinson of CTB McGraw Hill, and my fellow instructors who are too numerous to list individually.

My colleagues in the field who served as study participants: you have my respect and gratitude.

ABSTRACT

Adult literacy educators enter into teaching positions where they are entrusted with the education of adult learners, often without any prior preparation, and with very little guidance on how to actually teach the learners in their classes. Many “happen upon” jobs teaching adult literacy education, without previously having education as a career goal. Typically, the formal educational training of adult literacy educators is not in adult literacy, nor in the content areas that these instructors are expected to teach. Internationally, there is concern about the quality of educators in adult literacy due to their lack of formal education in adult literacy content areas (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies) and their lack of teacher qualifications (Lucas, et al, 2005). This study examined the current state of teacher preparation and professional development from the perspective of thirty-seven current teachers, twenty-four from within the federally and state-funded adult literacy education system in Ohio. The study also examined how well current hiring and professional development requirements prepare them for instructional practice and instructional decision-making with adult learners from various cultural and educational backgrounds. The study suggests a model of professional development that can potentially provide teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to feel prepared to deliver instruction to adult literacy students.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xvi
LIST OF FIGURES	xvii
CHAPTER I	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Research	4
Research Questions	5
Significance of the Study	5
Theoretical Framework	7
Methodology	8
Limitations and Delimitations	9
Definition of Terms	11
CHAPTER II	14
LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Need for Adult Literacy	14
Adult Learning and Development Theory	18
Adult Learners and Learning Disabilities	23
Reading Instruction	29
Numeracy Instruction	32

Teacher Quality as Strongest Predictor of Student Achievement	40
Current Practices in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy	43
Developing a Model for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development	48
CHAPTER III	58
METHODOLOGY	58
Methods	60
Paradigm	61
Setting	77
Participants	78
Selection procedures	81
Recruitment	81
Researcher roles and relationships with participants	82
Taking leave	83
Sources of data	84
Data Analysis	88
Textural Description	92
Trustworthiness	92
Ethical Considerations	93
Operationalization of Adequate	95

CHAPTER IV	96
DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	96
Statement of the Problem	96
Purpose of the Study	97
Research Questions	98
Organization of Data Analysis	98
Description of Participants	101
Age, race, and gender.	101
Educational background.	103
Experience in adult literacy.	106
Analysis of Data	108
Research Question 1: What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?.....	110
Instructors' indirect entry into the field.	110
Lack of resources and direction.	117
Limits and challenges imposed by external factors.....	121
Professional Development.	143
Experience in Education.	144
Current teaching situation.....	146
Instructional Practices.	149

Frustration with feeling unprepared.	159
Instructor Ingenuity.	161
Students	165
Summary of findings for Research Question 1	175
Research Question 2: What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators’ instructional practice?.....	176
Contribution of Past Formal Education.	176
Research Question 3: What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators’ instructional practice	191
Content of past professional development.	191
Past professional development and instructional decision-making	193
PD fills a gap.	196
Networking and idea sharing	197
Variety of delivery formats.	197
Introduction to new resources, knowledge, and approaches.	198
Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland.....	200
Professional development from outside of literacy.	202
Research Question 4: What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?.....	203
Areas for additional content area training.	204

Need for training in integrating technology.	211
Types of professional development desired.	214
Support for professional development.....	217
Priorities for accessing professional development.	220
Imagining a model for professional development.	222
Summary of Findings.....	239
Operationalization of “Adequate”	246
CHAPTER V	250
CONCLUSION.....	250
Statement of the Problem	250
Purpose of the Study	251
Research Questions	252
Significance of the Study	252
Theoretical Framework	253
Critical theory and participatory action research.....	254
Literature	255
Methodology	259
Limitations and Delimitations.....	261
Data Analysis	262
Implications.....	267

Funding for professional development.	267
Hiring and professional development policies.	269
Learning disability training requirement.	271
Require direct instruction in reading instruction.	272
Recommendations for Other Stakeholders.....	273
Recommendations for funders.....	273
Recommendations for program designers.	275
Recommendations for higher education program designers.	279
Recommendations for authors.	280
Recommendations for professional developers.	280
Co-researchers’ model of professional development.	292
Recommendation for a model of professional development for adult educators.	295
Future Studies.....	298
Limitations	304
Conclusion.....	304
REFERENCES	306
APPENDIX A.....	312
APPENDIX B	314
APPENDIX C	315
APPENDIX D.....	324

APPENDIX E	326
APPENDIX F	328
APPENDIX G	330
APPENDIX H.....	332

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Alignment of Data Sources to Research Questions	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 2 Educational Attainment of Survey Only Group	103
Table 3 Educational Attainment of Focus Group	104
Table 4 Survey Only Instructors' Experience in Adult Literacy.....	106
Table 5 Focs Group Instructors' Experience in Adult Literacy	107
Table 6 Instructors' Entry into the Field	111
Table 7 Participants' Instructional Experiences Outside of Literacy	145
Table 8 Survey Only Instructors' Time in Content Areas.....	151
Table 9 Focus Group Instructors' Time in Content Areas	152
Table 10 Contribution of Past Formal Education	177
Table 11 Survey Only Instructors' Perception of Preparation	182
Table 12 Focus Group Instructors' Perception of Preparation.....	183
Table 13 Comparison of Instructors' Perception of Preparation.....	185
Table 14 Focus Group Instructors' Average TABE Scores	188
Table 15 Content of Instructors' Professional Development	192
Table 16 Survey Only Instructors' Perception of the Contribution of PD	194
Table 17 Focus Group Instructors' Perception of the Contribution of PD.....	195
Table 18 Survey Only Instructors' Interests for Future PD	214
Table 19 Focus Group Instructors' Interests for Future PD	216
Table 20 Survey Only Instructors' Desired Support for PD	219
Table 21 Focus Group Instructors' Desired Support for PD	220
Table 22 Instructors' Priorities for PD	221

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Data sources and participant groups. This figure demonstrates the relationship between the data sources and the participant groups.....	99
Figure 2. Survey Only Instructors' Assignments.	148
Figure 3. Focus Group Instructors' Assignments.....	148
Figure 4. Survey Only group instructional materials use.	156
Figure 5. Focus Group instructional materials use.	156
Figure 6. Survey Only additional training in reading.	205
Figure 7. Focus Group additional training in reading.....	206
Figure 8. Survey Only group additional training in writing.	207
Figure 9. Focus Group training in writing.	207
Figure 10. Survey Group additional training in math.....	208
Figure 11. Focus Group additional training in mathematics.	209
Figure 12. Survey Only professional development support.	218
Figure 13. Focus Group professional development support.	219

CHAPTER I

I've been teaching GED for two months; since I graduated. My degree is in special education. I don't know high school English and reading. I don't know high school science and social studies. I don't know high school math.

Sometimes if my students have a question about math, I have to tell them that I will find out and tell them the next day, because I just don't know (Workshop Participant A, 2009).

Adult literacy educators are the men and women who work to increase the literacy and numeracy levels of adult learners. Literacy is defined as the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003). Literacy typically focuses on an individual's ability to read, write, speak, and function for the purposes of employment, engaging in society, and in fulfillment of personal goals and personal potential (Askov, 2000). Numeracy, which some believe is a component of overall literacy and should be a field of its own, describes the ability to make use of information presented in mathematical forms that enable an individual to cope with the practical demands of life (Gal, 2002; Tout & Schmidt, 2002). In this study, literacy was used to describe both literacy and numeracy skills except when referring exclusively to numeracy concepts. Adult literacy educators work to improve the quality

of the adult workforce by teaching non-readers to read, improving the mathematics and reading skills of learners, and preparing adult students for the GED test, a high school equivalency exam.

Adult literacy educators like the one quoted above enter into teaching positions where they are entrusted with the education of adult learners, often without any prior preparation, and with very little guidance on how to actually teach the learners in their classes. Many “happen upon” jobs teaching adult literacy education without previously having education as a career goal, perhaps working with adults in other community roles (Smith, 2006). As such, the formal educational training of many adult literacy educators is not in education, adult literacy, or in the content areas that these instructors are expected to teach. Internationally, there is concern about the quality of educators in adult literacy due to their lack of teacher qualifications and due to their lack of formal education in the five adult literacy content areas: 1) reading, 2) writing, 3) mathematics, 4) science, and 5) social studies) (Lucas et al., 2005).

This study investigated the preparation and professional development of adult literacy educators. Specifically, this study examined the current state of teacher preparation and professional development (PD) from a survey of, and from focus groups and interviews conducted with, adult literacy educators in Ohio. The study also examined the effectiveness of current hiring and professional development requirements in preparing teachers for instructional practice and instructional decision-making with adult learners from various cultural and educational backgrounds. The results of the study suggest a model of professional development that provides teachers with the skills they need to feel confident in their practice of adult literacy instruction.

Statement of the Problem

In 2006, ten adult literacy program directors were asked to identify the competencies that they believed were essential to effective teaching (Smith, 2006). Good literacy skills, the ability to differentiate instruction to satisfy the diverse learning needs of students, the ability to diagnose student learning problems, and possession of content area knowledge were identified as essential to effective instruction (Smith, 2006). To become an adult literacy educator, most sites require a 4-year degree; this degree does not have to be in education (Smith, 2006). In Ohio there is no requirement that instructors hold degrees in the content areas that they will be expected to teach, and there is no specific certificate required for adult literacy educators; it is up to individual programs to determine the minimum qualifications required to teach (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

ABE program funding levels are not adequate to support full-time staff, as such, most adult literacy educators are part-time staff (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). In fiscal year 2011, the state funded adult education system in Ohio operated 730 sites, serving 46,042 students, using 112 full-time and 754 part-time teachers (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). In K-12 education where teachers receive full-time pay and benefits, and where positions are in demand, requiring certification as a hiring requirement does not diminish the available employee pool. In adult literacy where many instructors piece together part-time hours, often working between several sites to achieve full-time work, and where instructors do not enter the field because they sought a career in adult education, it is difficult to require that teachers obtain certification before they begin employment. Without a pre-hire certification requirement, on-the-job professional

development is the only formal process in place to help instructors acquire the knowledge and skills needed for professional practice (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). This professional development typically takes the form of participation in regional or state conferences or one-shot workshops, which studies have shown to be ineffective in creating changes in teaching practices (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Purpose of the Research

The K-12 student achievement literature demonstrates the strong link between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2004; Rice, 2003). There is a need to study the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement in adult literacy education to demonstrate to policy makers that teacher professional development in adult literacy is worth the return on investment (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). There is also a need for more data about the background, needs, and formal education of adult literacy practitioners, particularly those that document the actual lived experiences of adult literacy educators (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Findings from these studies can better inform professional development policy making and planning. There are currently no studies that can inform policy decisions and professional development planning from the instructor perspective. Searches of electronic journal databases as recently as September of 2011 provided studies documenting the lived experiences of students in adult literacy, but only one study describing the experiences of the adult literacy educators themselves. As such, many studies about best practices in teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy rely heavily on the literature that has emerged from research conducted in the K-12 setting (Comings & Soricone, 2007). These circumstances underscore the need for

additional research on professional development of adult literacy professionals, particularly from the perspective of these professionals. While the breadth and depth of opportunities for research in adult literacy education is immeasurable, the focus of this study was to provide an understanding of how adult literacy educators enter into the field of adult literacy education; how they make meaning of, or provide the essence of their experiences of preparation, professional development, and their practice of literacy instruction, and to engage them in a conversation toward recommending a more effective model of teacher preparation and professional development based on a critical analysis of the literature, study data, and analysis of their experiences in the field.

Research Questions

The four research questions that follow guided this inquiry:

- 1) What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?
- 2) What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 3) What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 4) What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?

Significance of the Study

The research literature on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy is currently devoid of the perspective of practicing adult literacy educators. Their experiences of entering the field and becoming oriented as new teachers can inform procedures for hiring new instructors into the field. Their experiences of beginning their

instructional journey, working with adult learners, and accessing professional development can provide valuable information for policy makers and professional development planners. This study introduces that missing voice into the body of literature on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education. Since there are no uniform requirements to become an adult literacy educator, this investigation employed qualitative and quantitative research methods to determine what prerequisites are necessary to adequately prepare adult literacy instructors to teach adult literacy education in the United States from the perspective of practicing adult literacy educators.

Federally funded adult literacy programs were reformed by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) under the umbrella of workforce development (United States Department of Education, 2009). WIA requires all funded programs to use evidence from scientific research to inform decisions about the design of programs (Comings and Soricone, 2007). Adult literacy practitioners are given the freedom to design their programs to serve the goals of WIA. While these decisions often include practices that satisfy the accountability requirements of WIA, there has been no rigorous evaluation of program practices to assess their effectiveness in preparing adult learners for employment, continuing education, and life in general (Comings and Soricone, 2007). Literature reviews on adult literacy education conducted by Beder (1999), Kruidenier (2002), and Comings, Soricone, and Santos (2006) indicate that much of the research on adult education does not meet WIA standards for scientific research, and that among those that do, many include design flaws that compromise the validity of the findings.

What is absent from the research literature and from the professional development conversation, are the voices of practicing adult literacy educators who can provide

valuable insight on professional development for adult literacy educators and a new understanding of the authentic needs of instructors. Their voices can inform a new approach to professional development that could complement the current professional development delivery system, transform the quality of instruction adult learners worldwide can receive, and potentially improve the quality of instruction that adult literacy educators can provide. These findings can assist administrators in creating a continuing professional education program that is responsive to the needs of instructors, and equips instructors with the necessary competencies for adult literacy instruction. Further, findings from the study could inform an evaluation of the current professional development that is available, and provide a rationale for evaluating the immediate and longitudinal worth of the continuing professional education (CPE) that adult literacy educators receive.

Theoretical Framework

The body of literature on teacher impact and student achievement, adult learning and development theory, and professional development in education provided the theoretical framework for this study. These bodies of literature describe the unique and evolving needs of adult learners, the impact that teacher quality has on the achievement of learners, and the ability of professional development to increase teacher impacts through increasing teacher knowledge and skill. The literature underscores the importance of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and teacher certification with multiple studies showing their impacts on student outcomes. The literature also addresses the importance of attending to the varied needs of adult learners, and the knowledge and skills that teachers must possess to maximize learning for this diverse

body of students. The research that forms this theoretical base lead to the question of the adequacy of current models of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education where certification, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of adult learners are not requirements for entry into the field. The professional development and adult learning and development research form the basis of the best practice literature that inform this critique of current models of professional development.

Methodology

This mixed methods study used an approach informed by phenomenology that examined teacher preparation and professional development through the use of survey research combined with participatory action methodology. The study provided an understanding of adult literacy educators' experiences from practicing instructors who described the essence of what instructors experience upon entry into the field, while engaging the professional development system, and while teaching in the adult literacy classroom. The investigation provided insight into what instructors themselves identified as adequate preparation, and the appropriateness of current models of teacher preparation and professional development in providing that preparation. Using elements of the phenomenological approach, combined with a participatory action research (PAR) methodology, the researcher investigated the lived experiences of adult literacy educators and invited them as co-researchers in the study (Guishard, Fine, and Dowly, 2005). PAR methodology transformed the inquiry process to a collaborative endeavor that privileged the knowledge of potential research subjects, and elevated them as a result of that knowledge to co-researchers in the production of new knowledge (Miller & Maguire,

2009). Using a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and PAR methodologies enabled the researcher and co-researchers to identify themes that emerged from the accounts of current adult literacy instructors. These themes provide insight to policymakers and planners of continuing professional development to ensure that instructors receive training in the skills essential to effective instruction early in their careers as adult literacy educators.

The opportunity to collect data from the field through multiple data sources allowed for emergent theories that answered the principal research questions: How do adult literacy educators define adequate preparation, and what preparation, professional development, and knowledge are necessary for teachers to possess to be effective literacy and numeracy instructors? The mixed methods approach to this study used participatory action methodologies to lead instructors through a critique of current policies regarding teacher preparation and professional development, and also employed survey data, basic skills assessment scores, and personal narratives obtained through a focus group and interviews. The purpose of this critique was to help instructors visualize and define what they might recommend as a model for the preparation and professional development of adult literacy educators.

Limitations and Delimitations

For this study, which used a survey about professional practices, instructors may have been inclined to present the instructional practices that they thought were best, particularly given that the State Director who supervises them assisted with the distribution of the survey. Secondly, the State Director sent two additional surveys that the Ohio Board of Regents required instructors to complete in the week prior to

distributing the survey for this study. This may have reduced the number of respondents. In addition, the part time nature of the teaching workforce in adult literacy, and the use of multiple satellite program sites may have complicated data collection since participation in the survey for some sites may have been dependent on communication between site administrators and instructors.

For the PAR portion of the study, due to the four-hour time commitment required, most of the participants were instructors who were willing to participate because they have participated in at least one professional development activity facilitated by the researcher and therefore have a relationship with the researcher. One concern prior to the conduct of the study was that this relationship might have also influenced the level of honesty in responses offered during the focus group and interviews, as instructors may have wanted to make a good impression amongst peers. This relationship also influenced the diversity of the PAR participants; half of the group consisted of African American female instructors. In the researcher's current experience, participants in local professional development workshops in adult literacy tend to come from urban areas, and are predominately African-American females, although they are not represented in the field in such large numbers. These instructors attend workshops on a voluntary basis with no form of compensation from their respective worksites. The overrepresentation of African American female instructors in this sample did not appear to skew or influence findings as their narratives tended to be congruent with themes identified by the larger sample; this will be discussed further in chapter four of this work.

The sample for the qualitative portion of the study involved twenty instructors from urban sites in Northeast Ohio. The study provided information on their experiences

but did not suggest related impacts on student achievement since student achievement data were not made available. As the findings are limited to the experiences in the state being studied, and participants self-selected rather than randomly selected, the study sample was not representative of the population of adult literacy instructors. Therefore study results are not generalizable to conditions in other states.

The study was limited to adult literacy instructors. Although English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) also falls within the scope of the state-funded program, they were omitted for this particular study mainly because the additional needs for language instruction of adult learners, particularly those that are not literate in their first language, could be the subject of an extensive study on its own.

The researcher purposefully omitted any definitions of what it means to be effective as an instructor, or what would be considered adequate preparation so as not to bias the definitions that participants in the action research component created. The intention behind this omission was to ensure that definitions of effectiveness and adequacy are authentically those of the co-researchers.

Definition of Terms

Literacy is defined as the ability to use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential (National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003).

Numeracy is considered a component of overall literacy, and describes the ability to make use of information presented in mathematical forms that enable an individual to cope with the practical demands of life (Tout & Schmidt, 2002).

Self-direction is a learning process where learners take the initiative in

determining learning needs, selecting appropriate learning goals, selecting strategies and resources to facilitate learning, and evaluating progress toward learning goals, with or without the assistance of others (Smith, 2002).

Workforce development describes the policies, activities, and programs designed to create, sustain and retain a viable workforce that can support current and future business and industry needs (Jacobs, 2002).

Differentiated instruction – “To differentiate instruction is to recognize students varying background knowledge, readiness, language, preferences in learning, interests; and to react responsively. Differentiated instruction is a process to approach teaching and learning for students of differing abilities in the same class. The intent of differentiating instruction is to maximize each student’s growth and individual success by meeting each student where he or she is and assisting in the learning process” (Hall, Strangman, & Meyer, 2003, p.3).

Critical theory is a form of knowledge production that challenges traditional theories and the social, historical, and ideological structures that create them, with the intent of emancipating human beings from the structures that constrain them (Bowman, 2012).

Continuing Professional Education - Continuing professional education “refers to the education of professional practitioners, regardless of their practice setting, that follows their preparatory training and extends their learning.....throughout their careers” (Queeney, 2000, p. 375).

Participatory Action Research - “Participatory action research represents a stance within qualitative research methods—an epistemology that assumes knowledge is rooted

in social relations and most powerful when produced collaboratively through action. With a long and global history, participatory action research (PAR) has typically been practiced within community-based social action projects with a commitment to understanding, documenting, or evaluating the impact that social programs, social problems, or social movements bear on individuals and communities. PAR draws on multiple methods, some quantitative and some qualitative, but at its core it articulates a recognition that knowledge is produced in collaboration and in action” (Fine, Torre, Boudin, Bowen, Clark, Hylton, Martinez, Rivera, Roberts, Smart and Upegui, 2004, p 1).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Need for Adult Literacy

The picture that has emerged is that low literacy proficiency is relatively common with somewhere between one in five and one in three adult Americans with sufficient difficulty in reading or computation to be challenged by the ordinary tasks of everyday life and work. It is estimated that approximately 51 million American adults fall within this target population (Guy, 2005, p2).

Literacy and numeracy education are becoming more important in America, and success in developing broad literacy skills (which include numeracy) will soon be synonymous with success in life. Scholars have not agreed on a single definition of what it means to be functionally literate but the concept essentially refers to a person's ability to engage in certain activities and participate in society including, but not limited to, the labor market, citizenship, and the political process of the culture to which they belong (Guy, 2005; Shomos, 2010). Regardless of how literacy is defined, the consequences of

low literacy skills negatively impact individuals, families, and communities, and can have widespread economic impacts (Askov, 2007).

Adults with low literacy skills lack the cognitive skills that are predictors of success in the labor market, therefore addressing the needs of low literate adults is important to national, local, and personal economic productivity (Comings & Soricone, 2007; Mellard & Patterson, 2008). As the move toward a global economy, and the practice of outsourcing jobs from American to foreign soil move lower-skilled jobs offshore, the jobs that remain in the United States require higher levels of literacy (Kantner, 2008; Mackay, Burgoyne, & Warwick, 2006). This change in the employment landscape is one force that is actively moving literacy skills in general (and numeracy skills in particular) higher up on the national and regional priority list (National Center for Education and the Economy, 2007). As technology is increasing the demand for an educated workforce, technological advances are causing more procedures to become automated, decreasing the need for manual laborers, and increasing the need for workers who have the knowledge and skill to create, manage, operate, program, and repair that technology (Lee & Mather, 2008).

As an educated workforce is the driver of economic development, the lack of a skilled workforce is a driver of economic decline (Tsai, Hung & Harriott, 2010). Human capital is the single most important determinant of economic growth (Tsai, Hung & Harriott, 2010). Without a skilled workforce, job losses are imminent, reducing employment, business, and sales taxes, and impacting the economic infrastructure of state and local governments. As employer expectations increase, literacy providers must respond in order to produce an educated workforce that helps to keep businesses on

American soil, and create new employment opportunities (Askov, 2007). Declining high school graduation rates, currently 42% in the area of study, will no doubt impact the demand for adult education (Ohio Department of Education, 2009). The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) estimated the percent of Americans lacking basic prose literacy in 2003 by state and by county. In 2003 they found that nearly 800,000 Ohioans lacked basic prose literacy skills, or the ability to locate and use information contained in text. Nearly 94,000 of these Ohioans were residing in Cuyahoga County (NCES, 2003). In fiscal year 2006, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) reported 48,402 participants were served through the state-funded literacy program (ODE, 2009). Without improving their literacy skills and gaining educational credentials these adults are more likely to experience negative social and economic consequences (Mellard & Patterson, 2008). Low literacy skills are associated with higher unemployment, and underemployment rates, lower paying jobs, lower household incomes, poverty, and dependence on public assistance (Mellard & Patterson, 2008). Research has also shown that low literacy levels result in lower incomes for the employed when compared to their more educated counterparts (Mellard & Patterson, 2008). A study in Wales, England linked low literacy rates with increased criminality (Torgerson, Porthouse, & Brooks 2005). Literacy and other educational programs within correctional facilities have historically been used, and are currently seen, as a component both of rehabilitating inmates, and reducing the rates of recidivism (Messemer, 2011; United States Department of Education, 2009).

Lack of literacy skills and mathematical understanding can be detrimental to an individual's ability to fully experience citizenship, and function in society (Askov, 2007;

Kantner, 2008). Subban (2007) asserted that low literacy levels can impact a person's self-concept, cause them to doubt their self worth, and discourage them from speaking out against perceived injustices. Subban (2007) also reported that low literacy represents a barrier to participation in community affairs in general, and community development in particular, and that limited literacy is a stigma that can curtail resident input in community discussions and decisions . . . "More affluent community members tend to take over community organizations and shape the development agenda" (p. 68). If community residents are intimidated by their lack of literacy skills and avoid participating in community development activities, they lose the opportunity to impact what occurs in their communities; in essence, they become disenfranchised.

Engaging in the adult literacy system can have the opposite effect. Participating in adult literacy education can positively impact community involvement, providing students with the confidence to engage in community development (Comings & Soricone, 2007). Participating in adult literacy can also have positive impacts on employment, and children's education (Comings & Soricone, 2007). Adult students engage with adult literacy programs to improve employment opportunities; as a bridge with the secondary education system; and as a way to improve their quality of life (Mellard & Patterson, 2008). The United States government provides adult literacy education through WIA. Despite the documented importance of literacy and numeracy skills, and the availability of services through various agencies, Americans still lag behind their international counterparts in providing literacy and numeracy education to adult learners (American Institutes for Research, 2006). The fact is that in the adult literacy education system, relatively few programs are housed in exclusively adult

education agencies whose leaders fully understand and are committed to adult education and literacy (Guy, 2005). Adult literacy educators must be prepared to meet the learning needs of adult students to significantly impact literacy levels in America, and to combat the negative effects of low literacy levels. Instructors must be also able to understand and accommodate the unique needs of adult learners (Smith, 2006).

Adult Learning and Development Theory

“The whole point of theory- any theory- is to help us understand something better.”

(Clark & Caffarella, 1999, p. 3)

To understand the unique needs of adult learners, adult literacy professionals should have some working knowledge of adult learning and development theories. Instructors should also be able to apply those theories to the educational decision making that is required in the adult literacy classroom. Adult learning theories provide a framework for thinking about how adults learn, grow, and develop. Renowned psychologists Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Jean Piaget provided a framework for learning and development from infancy into adulthood, but it was not until after the 1970 publication of Malcolm Knowles' *The Modern Practice of Adult Education* that researchers turned their attention to the learning that occurs in adulthood (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), and to determining if and how adults learned differently from children.

Three theories have emerged from the literature of adult learning and development which are prevalent in the field of adult education. These theories can inform how professional development is designed, as well as serve as the content of

professional development in adult literacy education. The theories are experiential learning, self-directed learning, and transformational learning theory. They provide a theoretical basis for instructional approaches that can be used by adult literacy educators to build on the current knowledge that adult learners bring to the learning context, and appropriate learning that occurs as the result of adult learners' life experiences both within and outside of the adult literacy classroom.

Experiential learning is the learning that occurs from direct experiences. The body of knowledge on experiential learning follows the teaching of John Dewey (Merriam et. al., 2007). Dewey (1938) believed that all education comes about through experience. Experiential learning acknowledges the vast experiences that adult learners bring to the learning environment, as well as the potential for new knowledge creation that occurs through lived experiences, whether in formal or informal educational settings (Dewey, 1938; Merriam et al., 2007). In adult education, experiential learning is described favorably as a theory that credits knowledge generated outside of educational institutions and resists the notion that knowledge is only valid and legitimate when based on scientific evidence (Fenwick, 2003). Experiential learning acknowledges the personal knowledge and lived experiences of adult learners, and the unplanned learning that occurs independently of the watchful eye of an expert (Fenwick, 2003). Adult literacy educators who understand experiential learning theory can make a concerted effort to privilege learners' experiential knowledge, and provide opportunities for learners to share what they already know about topics as a part of standard practice enabling learners to see the value of their previous knowledge and experiences and allows them to use that as a foundation upon which they can construct new knowledge (McCleod, 2003).

Kolb conceptualized a constructivist model of experiential learning in 1984 (Merriam et al. 2007). In this model experiential learning involves participation in concrete experiences, reflection on observations made during the experience, abstract conceptualization of observations, and application of new skills in practical situations; these new practical situations become the concrete experiences for future experiential learning (Kolb 1984). Adult literacy educators who understand experiential learning theory can use that knowledge to create a classroom that values adult learners. In this environment, students' prior experiences, their informal and non-formal learning experiences, and cultural experiences that are different from mainstream American culture are valued, not discarded (Fenwick, 2003). Lessons are designed to build knowledge off of concrete learning experiences, then expanded through opportunities to reflect upon the experience, opportunities to form abstract conceptualizations of the experience, and opportunities to apply learning from these experiences in practical contexts (Kolb, 1984).

A second learning theory that capitalizes on students' lived experiences is transformational learning, based on the work of Mezirow, which was originally introduced in 1978 (Merriam et al., 2007). Transformational learning focuses on the additive nature of learning, specifically that learning occurs when an individual constructs new interpretations of previous experiences. In essence, transformational learning is the adjustment of an individual's worldview, a reinterpretation of perspective that is gained in the light of new experiences. It is a process that begins with a disorienting dilemma that requires one to reevaluate pre-existing assumptions that they have about themselves, their lives, and their world (Baumgartner, 2001). New

experiences challenge previously held beliefs, and do not merge seamlessly with previous definitions of what is true about the world, creating disequilibrium within an individual (Baumgartner, 2001). The disequilibrium can only be resolved by either rejecting the experience that created the dilemma, or by critical reflection that leads to a broadening of the individual's worldview (Baumgartner, 2001).

Adult literacy educators can help adult learners work through disorienting dilemmas and appropriate learning by facilitating students' understandings about how they interpret future events, and how they respond to those events (Case, 1996; Merriam et al., 2007). Adult literacy educators can use knowledge of this theory to create both a constructivist and sociocultural learning environment to help students integrate learning with the realities of their lives, promote reflection on disorienting dilemmas, and present alternate viewpoints to help students grow and appropriate learning related to life experiences both inside and outside of the adult literacy classroom (Case, 1996, Merriam et al., 2007). This attention to the details of lived experiences allows adult literacy educators to provide culturally relevant learning opportunities that can enhance the meaning of education for adult learners (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Yamauchi, 2005).

The third learning theory, self-directed learning, focuses on learning that occurs primarily outside of educational institutions; sociocultural learning that is embedded in the everyday lives of adults (Case, 1996; Merriam et al., 2007; Saxe, 1994). Self-directed learning theories seek to describe how this learning takes place, and to describe the characteristics of self-directed learners. Based on Knowles' concept of andragogy in which the focus of education is not on teaching but on facilitating learning, self-directed learning is the belief that as adults mature they become more deliberate about learning on

their own (Knowles, 1973, p. 41; Merriam et al., 2007). Self-directed learning focuses on the autonomy, the level of personal motivation, and the degree of self-discipline and critical reflection of learners. Merriam et al. (2007) identified three goals of instructional models of self-directed learning that can guide adult literacy educators in their practice. The first goal is to nurture and encourage self-direction in students by guiding them in the process of planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities (Merriam et al., 2007). Recognizing that many adult learners are on the cusp of transitions in their lives (Wolf, 2005), the second goal for educators in self-directed learning is to assist adults in appropriating transitional learning. This helps adults understand the potential learning benefits of experiences, and addresses negative emotions related to experiences that if left unaddressed can become barriers to learning (Merriam et al., 2007; Wolf 2005). The third goal focuses on emancipatory learning; helping participants see the oppressive political structures that operate around them, with the intention that learners will be empowered to initiate change (Merriam et al., 2007). Of primary importance in self-directed learning whether focusing on the narrow goal of developing self direction in learners, or the broader goal of collective action, is encouraging learners to be the central focus of adult learning activities, and to exercise control over educational decisions (Merriam et al., 2007).

In designing learning activities, adult literacy educators must realize the importance of identifying adult learners' development of self-directedness (Chu & Tsai, 2009; Terry, 2006). Adult literacy educators also need to see the development of self-direction as a goal of lifelong learning. When selecting and designing teaching materials, activities, and media, practitioners must consider the differences in the levels of self-

direction of their students, and guide students toward activities that support their learning goals appropriately (Terry, 2006). Adult literacy educators who involve students in setting learning goals and measuring progress toward those goals enhance the growth of self-directedness in their students (Mezirow, 1981; Terry, 2006). Being familiar with adult learning and adult development theories can help adult literacy instructors select instructional models that are the most effective for adult learners (McCleod, 2003).

Adult Learners and Learning Disabilities

The National Joint Commission on Learning Disabilities offers the following definition of learning disabilities:

Learning disabilities is a general term that refers to a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and use of listening, speaking, reading, writing, reasoning, or mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual, presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction, and may occur across the life span. Problems in self-regulatory behaviors, social perception, and social interaction may exist with learning disabilities but do not by themselves constitute a learning disability. Although learning disabilities may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (for example, sensory impairment, mental retardation, serious emotional disturbance), or with extrinsic influences (such as cultural differences, insufficient or inappropriate instruction), they are not the result of those conditions or influences (2009, p. 1).

Although learning theories provide helpful approaches for the adult literacy

educator, the research that exists on adult learning theory was conducted on students with a different set of cognitive skills than those typically associated with students in adult literacy programs (Reder & Strawn, 2001). The expectations in the adult learning and development literature may not be appropriate for all adult literacy students. Adult literacy educators must be able to identify which students can meet those expectations, and determine which approaches are appropriate for which students. Educators must take particular care when working with students with learning disabilities (Comings & Soricone, 2007). Learning disabilities (LD) were historically thought to be a problem of childhood that represented temporary delays in learning and development (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2002). The assumption was that students would outgrow learning disabilities as they grew and developed, but research has shown that learning disabilities persist through adulthood (Corley & Taymans, 2002; National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, 2002).

While it is difficult to determine the prevalence of learning disabilities in the adult literacy population due to the unavailability of funding for assessment tools and qualified assessment staff, estimates indicate that as many as 85% of adult learners enrolled in literacy programs have learning disabilities, and many of these students have multiple risk factors (National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Summer 1995; NCSALL, 2002; Smith, 2006). Further, while adult literacy programs are bound by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) not to discriminate, and in individual cases to comply with other disability legislation, they are not required to screen for or identify LD (Scanlon & Lenz, 2002). In Ohio, state-funded programs do screen for LD as a part of the student orientation. Sites use the Washington 13, an oral assessment tool

that has not been validated, and is not indicated for use with students who are not proficient in English (Payne, 1998). The tool was developed through a research project for the State of Washington Division of Employment and Social Services Learning Disabilities Initiative to assist them as they worked with their welfare clientele; it is not intended to diagnose learning disabilities (Payne, 1998).

According to the National Health Interview Survey (2003) approximately 16% of boys and 8% of girls ages 5-17 were diagnosed with a learning disability, indicating that adults with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) are overrepresented in the population of adult literacy students (Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, 2010). SLD involves disorders of learning and cognition that are intrinsic to the learner and prevent children and adults from processing and using information in a meaningful manner (Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities, 2010). Most of the research on learning disabilities has been conducted with younger school-age populations. As a consequence, there is less reliable information about what constitutes best practices in working with learning disabled adults in adult literacy education programs (Scanlon & Lenz, 2002). This leaves adult literacy educators with the challenge of knowing which interventions and materials to use with their students (some with learning disabilities), and emphasizes the need for adult literacy educators to receive focused, sustained professional development that models instructional strategies that are effective with adult learners, particularly those with learning disabilities. The effects of learning disabilities can play a significant role in how adult learners perform (NCSALL, 2002). Mellard and Patterson (2008) studied 311 adult literacy students and found that significant differences existed between the general adult education population and those

who self-identified as having SLD.

In NCSALL's (2002) review of seven studies, it was determined that adults with learning disabilities select vocational education over college at higher rates than their non-disabled counterparts. Adults with learning disabilities often find themselves in low-wage jobs without healthcare or other benefits, and experience the negative social and economic consequences associated with low literacy levels (e.g. unemployment and poverty) at higher levels than adult education students without SLD (NCSALL, 2002; Mellard & Patterson, 2008).

To achieve academically and decrease the likelihood of negative social and economic consequences, adult students with disabilities need instructors who are familiar with the specific learning needs of adults with learning disabilities (Comings & Soricone, 2007). Most adult literacy educators will not teach using methods that support the needs of their students with learning disabilities, such as direct instruction of literacy concepts paired with instruction on learning strategies (NALLDC, 1995; NCSALL, 2002; Smith, 2006;). Historically, research shows that student teachers will teach the way they were taught, even overriding what they learn in teacher education programs (Britzman, 1991; Lortie, 1975). Strategies that research has found to impact the learning gains of students with learning disabilities include connecting learning to students' prior learning, purpose for learning, and interests (Pannucci & Walmsley, 2007). Scaffolding instruction, teaching to students' learning styles, and teaching meta cognitive strategies are also instructional methods that research has found to be effective with students with learning or intellectual challenges (Pannucci & Walmsley, 2007).

This emphasizes the need for adult literacy educators to receive focused, sustained

professional development that models instructional strategies that are effective with adult learners, particularly those with learning disabilities (Taymans & Corley, 2001). This professional development must incorporate time for teachers to integrate practices into their teaching (NSCALL, 2002). Adult literacy educators need professional development that assists instructors with selecting accommodations and assistive technologies which are devices that when used can compensate for disabilities, for students with learning disabilities (Mellard & Patterson, 2008; NCSALL, 2002). Instructors also need education that includes clinical teaching approaches beyond just providing repetition of poorly constructed lessons for lower skilled learners (Mellard & Patterson, 2008; NCSALL, 2002). This also emphasizes the need to assess and identify learning disabled adults so effective strategies can be used to improve student achievement in mathematics and reading.

The National Reporting System (NRS) that is used to measure program accountability for adult literacy identifies six levels of literacy, described as Educational Functioning Levels (EFLs) (Appendix A). At the lowest level, students have no, or very minimal reading skills, and at its highest level students are able to read at the level of a student who is completing the ninth month of their twelfth grade year of schooling (Mellard & Patterson, 2008). At the highest level, technical reading, and college-level reading should be possible. Mellard & Patterson (2008) write that the NRS EFLs are used for placement in adult education. In practice, however, students are not placed in classes based on those levels; they are more typically placed on a first-come, first-served basis in whichever class is provided in the most convenient location at times that best fit the students' schedules (R. Peterson personal communication, December, 2011). The

reality in the field then is that adult students enter literacy programs and literacy classrooms at different EFLs, attend at different rates, progress at different rates, and participate in programs that have open enrollment wherein students can enter a program at any time during the year versus only during open enrollment periods, resulting in teachers potentially gaining new students every day (Smith & Hofer, 2003). Practically speaking, in a class of twenty students, the natural result is that students will be on twenty different learning plans.

Mellard & Patterson (2008) reported that placing students based on educational functioning levels does not address the differences in the cognitive processes of adult learners, and that these learners require alternative instructional strategies such as those used extensively in the K-12 educational system, and required by law in the ADA. Students with different ways of processing information can initially test at the same EFL. The educational plans for these students should be designed to accommodate their specific learner characteristics. In Mellard & Patterson's (2008) study of the differences between demographically similar adult students with SLD and adult students without SLD, they found significant differences in general intelligence, functional reading (15 to 35% difference), and reading comprehension (10 to 15% difference). Mellard & Patterson (2008) concluded that these students require more comprehensive assessments that can produce educational profiles on which instructional decisions are based. The instructional decisions should focus on the specific skills and cognitive processes that are impacted by each student's SLD. A mathematics example would be focusing on executive functioning skills, such as organizing the information in a word problem (cognitive process), and focusing on adding and subtracting decimals (specific numeracy

skill). An example from language arts might be completing a graphic organizer to organize parts of a story and focusing on reading skills such as developing phonemic awareness (Comings & Soricone, 2007).

Reading Instruction

Teaching reading is a challenging and complex activity under the best circumstances. Knowledge of adult learner characteristics and classroom management skills alone are not likely sufficient to teach reading and related literacy skills to adult nonreaders...even among certified teachers, only those who have certification in elementary education are likely to have had specific coursework in reading instruction (Smith, 2006, p.171).

The ability to read requires the ability to identify words (decoding), and the ability to comprehend those words individually, within sentences, and within more extensive texts (NCSALL, 2002). Reading is made of five components: phonemic awareness, phonics awareness, vocabulary, fluency, and reading comprehension (Learning Point Associates, 2004). Phonemic awareness is the most basic of the five components of reading instruction, and has to do with the ability to identify the forty-four sounds of the English language (Learning Point Associates, 2004). In 1997, Congress convened a National Reading Panel (NRP) to investigate the research-based knowledge concerning reading and the effectiveness of various approaches to reading instruction (NRP, 2000). They conducted an analysis of experimental and quasi-experimental studies that measured reading as an outcome. From their review of correlational studies they identified phonemic awareness and letter knowledge as the two best school-entry predictors of how well children will learn to read during the first 2 years of instruction

(NRP, 2000).

Phonemic awareness is having an understanding of the relationship between a specific letter and its sound or sounds. It includes the ability to hear and identify individual speech sounds. If a student lacks phonemic awareness, he or she will not be able to develop phonics awareness. Phonics awareness is the second component of reading instruction. Phonics is the understanding that words are made up of a combination of individual sounds. Phonics awareness is recognizing phonemic sounds, and being able to put these sounds together and pull them apart. Students who have phonics awareness are able to read unfamiliar words by identifying the specific sounds of letters and letter combinations, and “sounding the word out” by identifying the letters and speaking the corresponding sounds out loud. The National Reading Panel’s (2000) meta-analysis of research on reading instruction in K-12 education found systematic phonics instruction produces significant benefits for students in kindergarten through 6th grade and for children having difficulty learning to read. Older children receiving phonics instruction were better able to decode and spell words and to read text orally, but their comprehension of text was not significantly improved (NRP, 2000). Systematic synthetic phonics instruction had a positive and significant effect on the reading skills of disabled readers’ (NRP, 2000). As students gain mastery of the relationship between the sounds of the English language and letters, they will have an easier time identifying words, leading to improved reading fluency and reading comprehension (NRP, 2000).

Reading fluency is the ability to read text with accuracy at the pace of normal speech, and is measured by the number of words read correctly per minute. When students are fluent readers, they spend less energy deciphering each word and are able to

focus on comprehending what is read (NRP, 2000). The breadth of a student's vocabulary impacts their reading fluency. It is simply easier for students to understand words with which they are already familiar (NRP, 2000). The more words in a student's vocabulary the easier it will be to make sense of text, and the student can direct more energy to comprehension. This is very important in adult literacy where social studies and science comprehension are heavily dependent on content-specific vocabulary.

Adult literacy educators need to be familiar with these components of reading and the strategies needed to help adult learners improve their reading skills, but the GED books which determine the curriculum for many adult literacy programs only address reading comprehension, the most advanced of the five components (Smith, 2006). Adult literacy programs, particularly those serving adults with learning disabilities, need to incorporate instruction in the direct teaching of all five components of reading instruction (NCSALL, 2002). Armed with these tools, teachers are more likely to help students improve reading skills and experience greater success in literacy programs, as evidenced by this finding in the report of the National Reading Panel (2000).

The preparation of teachers to better equip students to develop and apply reading comprehension strategies to enhance understanding is intimately linked to students' achievement in this area. Teaching reading comprehension strategies to students at all grade levels is complex.

Teachers not only must have a firm grasp of the *content* presented in text, but also must have substantial knowledge of the *strategies* themselves, of which strategies are most effective for different students and types of content and of how best to teach and model strategy use (*emphasis added*)

(p.15).

Numeracy Instruction

A blend of strategy and content knowledge is also critically important for teachers of numeracy. The American Institute for Research (AIR) produced a document in the spring of 2006, “A Review of the Literature in Adult Numeracy: Research and Conceptual Issues.” The document highlights the following topics in adult numeracy instruction:

1. The importance of numeracy skills for being successful in today’s society.
2. The lack of agreement on how numeracy is defined and what numeracy education entails.
3. The need for teachers who are better trained in: a) how adults learn b) effective instructional strategies in mathematics for adult learners, and c) in the mathematics concepts themselves.
4. The link between the preparation of instructors to student achievement.
5. The lack of research in professional development in Adult Basic Education (ABE) in general and in adult numeracy in particular.

These key topics were identified through a broad review of the literature, combined with data on the underperformance of American students in comparison to their peers internationally.

Numeracy is a critical component of adult literacy education. It is necessary for success in life, continuing education, and the world of work. Adults lacking numeracy skills face challenges in obtaining and retaining family-sustaining employment opportunities, in seeking additional education, and in the management of their everyday

lives (Gal, 2002). American skill deficiencies in numeracy are well documented based on results published by the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) in 2001, and the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) in 2002. Studies find that while American adults can perform simple arithmetic calculations when explicitly asked to perform them, 25-50% of adults were not able to complete tasks that infer which operations are needed, or those tasks that require retrieval of data from text, charts, or graphs (Gal, 2002). Ranked internationally, American adults are 19th out of 21 countries on the IALS (Gal, 2002). The state of education requires a close look at curriculum and instruction, and a clear definition of what it means to be numerate.

While educators agree that numeracy instruction is an important component of adult literacy education and workforce development, there is no agreement on two key concerns: 1) what constitutes numeracy 2) what teachers need in terms of educational background, professional development, and skills to be effective numeracy instructors (Gal 2002). Decisions about what constitutes numeracy are value-laden and culturally constructed. Inherent in the decision of what to include and what to exclude in numeracy are cultural judgments about what is important, and which mathematics skills are valuable (AIR, 2006). How numeracy is defined determines the scope and limits of instructional practices and curriculum design, and determines the nature and quality of the education adult students receive (Hagedorn, Newlands Blayney, & Bowles, 2003). If definitions include only the functional application of mathematics operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) instructional practices will include those skills to the exclusion of others, such as developing algebraic thinking, or applying mathematics concepts to real life contexts and others identified as critical to workforce

education (AIR, 2006). These decisions influence the practice of numeracy instruction (AIR, 2006). For many workforce education programs such as the State Tested Nursing Assistant Registry at a local community college, for example, the standard is that participants must operate at an eighth-grade level in reading and mathematics (S. Manley, personal communication, September, 2007). Literacy programs that feed those workforce programs limit the scope of their instruction to eighth grade mathematics and reading, although students are often accepted even if they test below these levels (S. Manley, personal communication, September, 2007). Once a student reaches that level, they are removed from their literacy activities, and placed in the State Tested Nursing Assistant Training (S. Manley, personal communication, September, 2007). To progress further in their nursing field, however, those students will eventually need a high school equivalency diploma, which requires skills beyond twelfth grade (S. Manley, personal communication, September, 2007).

If numeracy is defined narrowly as computational skills, then the decisions regarding which curriculum to follow will be guided by that limited expectation. Until adult literacy providers and policymakers can agree on a definition of what numeracy is, and what mathematics skills are essential for a person to know, practitioners cannot begin to determine what standards should exist for effective numeracy instruction. In the delivery system under review in this study, standards do exist for mathematics instruction, indicating the skills students should be able to perform based on their Educational Performance Level and assessment scores (Lepicki, Glendon, Austin, Wonacott, & Vlach, 2009). However, instructional decisions are most likely based on the commercial materials made available to teachers (Smith & Hofer, 2003). In many

instances, the GED book selected by the program is the curriculum for the literacy program (Smith & Hofer, 2003).

A fairly recent development within the state of Ohio was the former governor's goal of enrolling 230,000 more students in a ten-year period in postsecondary education while keeping more graduates in the state and attracting more talent to the state, leading to a greater emphasis on transitioning GED students to pursue postsecondary education (University System of Ohio, 2008). To accomplish this goal, more students have to transition out of high school and adult literacy programs and enroll in credit-bearing classes and degree programs at colleges and universities. The National Center on Education Statistics (2011) reported that 42% of first-year students attending two-year colleges, and 39% of first-year students attending four-year colleges require at least one remedial course upon college entry. To meet the Governor's goal, programs will have to begin preparing students beyond what is expected on the GED, and beyond remedial education. The mathematics knowledge that postsecondary institutions expect entering students to possess and the changing demands of the workforce must also shape curricular and instructional decisions, particularly for federally funded programs whose funding is attached to students setting and achieving post-secondary education and workforce development goals.

Another key component of helping students reach higher numeracy levels and goals is professional development for numeracy instructors in adult literacy programs. Teacher competence (knowledge of pedagogy and knowledge of mathematics content) influences the nature and quality of adult numeracy education. The literature review conducted by AIR (2006) showed a great need for professional development for adult

numeracy instructors. Further Education (FE) is United Kingdom's equivalent of adult literacy education. Lucas (2007) explored the balance between subject and pedagogical knowledge in in-service training in response to increased demands for training of teachers in FE in England. Given the wide range of backgrounds of FE teachers, the researcher determined that trainees should be assessed, and training should be based on the needs and knowledge gaps of trainees (Lucas, 2007). Some teachers have pedagogic knowledge but need additional subject knowledge, and some have significant subject knowledge, but do not know how to teach (Lucas, 2007). Lucas, Loo, & McDonald (2005) conducted a study to determine the sequencing and organization of training courses for initial teacher education (ITE) in the UK. They found that while their older trainees possessed pedagogic knowledge and required more theoretical training, novice trainees required more content knowledge before they could undertake pedagogic knowledge (Lucas et al., 2005).

The professional development that is made available to teachers must include what to teach and how to teach (Lucas et al., 2005), and must incorporate features for effective professional development (American Institutes for Research, 2007). Effective professional development practices include 1) focusing on the full scope of mathematics units versus a singular focus on algebra; 2) designing professional development that maximizes contact time and includes follow-up activities for teachers to provide a deeper understanding of mathematics concepts; and 3) using a constructivist approach that includes hands-on learning, inquiry based learning, and the use of real world problems (AIR, 2007). Sherman et al. (2009) did a scan of twenty professional development initiatives in adult education to identify professional development practices for

mathematics instruction. They found that most professional development was offered through multiple workshops, and that follow-up was not typically a part of professional development initiatives (Sherman et al., 2009). The researchers made six recommendations for future professional development initiatives which included 1) providing multi-session activities over time to increase contact hours, 2) using distance learning training methods, 3) modeling good instruction for participants, 4) fostering networking among practitioners within geographic areas, 5) building professional development around content standards, and 6) evaluating teacher change (Sherman et al., 2009).

Gresham's (2007) research also produced recommendations for the professional development of numeracy educators through examination of the effect of conceptual mathematics instruction on the mathematics anxiety levels of pre-service early childhood/elementary schoolteachers. The study showed that using manipulatives and concrete experiences in instruction helps pre-service teachers to understand the procedural purposes of mathematical concepts (Gresham, 2007). Understanding mathematical content as well as mathematical procedures helped pre-service teachers to reduce their mathematics anxiety, and helped them to be more effective at teaching mathematics (Gresham, 2007). Learning conceptual knowledge and methods for teaching numeracy content through concrete learning experiences could potentially improve the effectiveness of mathematics instruction in adult literacy as well, providing more support for professional development that includes training on a conceptual understanding of literacy and numeracy concepts, and an

understanding of conceptual teaching approaches. Given the many and varied definitions of numeracy, and the lack of a national curriculum for numeracy, teachers are often left to their own devices to determine how to help students leave programs as numerate adults. A review of the dominant instructional approaches used in numeracy classrooms, particularly those servicing adults with mathematics difficulties, found that constructivist teaching styles were predominant (van Kraayenoord & Elkins, 2004). Wadlington & Wadlington (2008) described strategies for helping students with mathematics difficulties, which include setting high expectations, having a challenging curriculum, and instructing effectively. They assert that teachers should: create a safe environment for students to learn mathematics; link word problems to the students and their lives; introduce the “big picture” in mathematics, and break it down into its smallest parts, presenting it step by step; allow time for students to over-learn mathematics concepts until using the skills becomes automatic; explain and model mathematics vocabulary; and provide formal and informal assessments of mathematics mastery (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2008).

Wadlington & Wadlington (2008) suggest that learning and instructional styles can impact the effects of mathematics anxiety. They described two mathematics learning styles that students can have - qualitative and quantitative (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2008). Quantitative learners are more “part- to- whole learners” who are good at calculations but struggle with mathematics concepts. They learn best by direct instruction. Qualitative mathematics learners are more “whole-to-part,” and learn mathematics by perceiving patterns and

relationships (Wadlington & Wadlington, 2008). Gresham (2007) investigated the relationship between mathematics anxiety and the learning styles of pre-service elementary school teachers. The study involved two hundred and sixty-four pre-service elementary teachers who had completed three mathematics courses and an elementary mathematics content course. There was a positive correlation between global orientation and mathematics anxiety – as global orientation increased, mathematics anxiety increased (Gresham, 2007). The author explains that global learners learn best when they begin with the whole picture, focusing on mathematics concepts before moving to mathematics procedures, however, the majority of mathematics instruction is delivered in a very systematic and linear process (Gresham, 2007). Professional development in adult literacy can help instructors fully understand mathematics concepts, and learn how to deliver instruction that focuses on concepts and better aligns with student learning styles.

Tett & Maclachlan (2007) explored the interconnections between learning, self-confidence, identity as a learner, and social capital. A positive adult literacy and numeracy learning experience does impact learner confidence, learner identity, and social capital. Social capital is defined as the social relationships and personal networks that serve as a resource to the learner. Learners who were formerly identified as incapable or less capable learners can change that perception through success with learning, increased social support for learning, and the increase in self confidence that comes from repeated incidences of academic success (Tett & Maclachlan, 2007). Adult literacy educators who have

both content and pedagogical knowledge can help students experience success with numeracy and mathematics learning, by possessing the knowledge and skills to help students develop conceptual understanding of mathematics concepts. This could result in improved self-confidence among adult literacy learners, and altered perceptions of their abilities as learners. Professional development for adult literacy educators must have the dual objective of increasing content knowledge and the skills needed to convey that knowledge to students to produce high quality teachers.

Teacher Quality as Strongest Predictor of Student Achievement

Teacher quality is a determinant of student success (USDOE, 2002). Research studies in K-12 literature suggest that teachers are the most important factor in student achievement (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Researchers have longitudinally tracked the students of teachers, and have found significant differences as large as one grade level in the achievement levels of the students of high quality teachers over those of lower quality teachers (USDOE, 2002). Smith (2010) wrote that teacher quality and effectiveness are influenced by instructors' backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications. The United States Department of Education (2002) reported that the single most important factor in student achievement is having a teacher with a strong academic background. No Child Left Behind legislation emphasizes subject matter preparation as a key component of a strong educational background (USDOE, 2002). Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) reviewed fifty-seven studies of teacher quality and found that within those studies teachers' general academic and verbal ability, subject matter knowledge, and knowledge about teaching and learning gained through teacher

preparation courses impacted student achievement.

Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) found educational experience also to be related to student achievement. In this same review of research studies Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) found that research has demonstrated the importance of content area knowledge, and that students who have high school mathematics and science teachers who have a major in the subjects they teach experience greater academic gains than students taught by out-of-field teachers who do not have similar content area preparation, and that education coursework adds to the influence of subject matter knowledge. This finding underscores the importance of content area knowledge in adult literacy where instructors may be required to teach five content areas: mathematics, science, social studies, reading, and writing (Smith & Hofer, 2003).

In science and mathematics the increases in student achievement related to teacher certification (a process that requires a blend of content and pedagogical knowledge) were greater than the effects of content degrees at the graduate and undergraduate level on student achievement, underscoring the importance of pedagogical knowledge in addition to content area knowledge (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). While content knowledge is a critical component of student achievement, it cannot replace knowledge about instructional strategies, and knowledge of student learning and development (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). Studies using national and state data have reported significant relationships between teacher education and certification measures and student performance at the individual teacher, school, district, and state levels (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002). The students of certified teachers outperformed the students of uncertified teachers, and the certified teachers felt more

prepared (Smith, 2006).

Research has also related strong teaching self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1993) to student achievement (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Self-efficacy is defined as belief in one's capability to produce a desired outcome, which, in this case is student learning. (Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, & Kimbrough, 2009). General self-efficacy beliefs represent a person's belief in the power of education, and personal self-efficacy is a belief in one's own competence as a teacher (Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, & Kimbrough, 2009). Greater achievement was found among rural, urban, majority Black, and majority White schools for students who had teachers with high levels of self-efficacy (Swackhamer, Koellner, Basile, & Kimbrough, 2009). Swackhamer et al. (2009) hypothesized that teachers' self-efficacy beliefs could be increased through courses that combined pedagogy and content knowledge.

In their survey of 88 middle school teachers attending professional development to become highly qualified in science or mathematics, Swackhamer et al (2009) found that although personal teacher efficacy levels did not differ significantly, the teachers' outcome expectancies were higher for teachers who had four or more classes in their content areas than for teachers who had three classes or fewer. They believed that personal teaching efficacy levels did not increase for instructors in the sample because the sample consisted of experienced teachers who already had high levels of teaching self-efficacy. One teacher in the study commented, "As a result of the RM-MSMSP grant, I have been able to include a variety of hands-on, inquiry-based activities to supplement an otherwise uninteresting curriculum. In addition, I have gained additional content knowledge

in areas of mathematics and science, thus giving me more confidence to teach these subjects accurately from day to day” (Swackhamer et al., 2009, p.74).

These findings support professional development that emphasizes the development of content knowledge even for experienced educators with high self-efficacy beliefs. It also supports professional development centered on content knowledge and pedagogy for novice teachers as a way to increase teacher self-efficacy, outcome efficacy, and student achievement.

Current Practices in Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy

“Regardless of whether it is the teacher’s background and qualifications, teaching methodologies, or alignment of standards with curriculum and accountability that leads to student success, each of these depends on effective training and preparation of teachers” (Smith & Gillespie, 2007, p. 207).

In the field of adult literacy education there is not a unified standard, certification, or minimum educational requirement to enter the field. Certification in adult literacy education is not required in most states, nor is formal training in education (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Teachers can become teachers with only a few hours of preparation although some states do require certification, some have professional development requirements, and some have mandatory orientations (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). This orientation is the only preparation that some teachers receive, and it does not cover content knowledge, instructional strategies, or learner needs. The course description in Ohio calls for five contact hours and reads:

New Staff Orientation (NSO) is an online training designed to provide a

convenient format for new ABE staff to learn more about ABE in Ohio.

Modules include: The ABE System; ABE students; the Student Experience Model; Accountability; Program Operations; and Professional Development. Each module has Investigative Activities to be completed using the information and web resources provided within the training. Plus, there is a Final Quiz to check your overall understanding

(http://mercury.educ.kent.edu/database/rcn/calendar_detail_prelogin.cfm?ItemsID=2112).

In Ohio, the State is required to provide professional development for the staff of state-funded programs and in FY 2007 provided approximately 2.1 million dollars to support the training of ABE personnel (ODE, 2009). The state requires two activities per academic year for staff working seven (7) hours or more per week, and one activity for staff working less than seven (7) hours. The New Teacher Orientation described above counts as a professional development activity. Other allowable PD activities include workshops, institutes, action research, participation in special projects, conferences, focus groups, peer monitoring, local program activities, classroom visitations, demonstration projects, presenting/facilitating, and college courses (ODE, 2009). Attending one forty-five minute session at a conference can satisfy the PD requirement for instructors who work fewer than seven hours per week. Elsewhere in the state's ABE PD policy it is stated that although projects authorized by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and funded by the State department of Education must be certified, "*Since there is no specific certificate required by ABE* (emphasis added), teachers hold many different types of teaching certificates. When hiring, *programs may*

evaluate teachers' specialty area depending on job requirements (emphasis added) (ODE, 2009).

Several realities in adult literacy education pose challenges to requiring certification as a condition of hire as is possible in the K-12 system. Adult education instructors are mostly part-time employees, with many teachers working part-time at several sites to achieve full-time income (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007; Smith & Hofer, 2003). With few opportunities for full-time employment, the adult literacy workforce loses the stability that exists in K-12 education. Due to the part-time, and often voluntary, nature of many instructional positions in adult literacy education, where employment benefits are not available to workers and volunteers, it is difficult to require certification as a prerequisite for employment. In addition, the part-time nature of the field presents challenges to scheduling professional development. Often educators are not compensated for the time they spend in professional development, so the opportunity cost of attending (i.e. missing the opportunity to make wages in order to attend) can also be prohibitive (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Professional development opportunities are often offered regionally, adding the additional time and cost of travel. In addition, teachers who may work at satellite sites may not see program administrators or other staff members, and may therefore not learn of professional development activities that do exist (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Professional development is the main vehicle for improving teacher knowledge and skill in adult literacy education. For many adult literacy educators, in-service trainings, workshops, or conferences are the primary method of professional development (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). These opportunities are often offered as single-session

workshops, making it even more important for the professional development offerings to be as effective as possible. Professional development can be used to improve the competence of teachers and increase their ability to produce competent learners (Smith, 2006). Without it many students in adult literacy programs, particularly those with SLD or other learning challenges that need specialized instruction, will be instructed by staff that may have general knowledge and great intentions but are otherwise not prepared to meet the challenges of adults with significant literacy needs and learning disabilities (Ross-Gordon, 1998).

There are two types of professional development that adult educator trainers can use. Traditional professional development is the short-term professional development opportunities that are typical in adult literacy such as workshops and conference sessions. The other type of professional development is job-embedded professional development. Job embedded PD was adopted in the K-12 system after research studies began to demonstrate that traditional professional development has some ineffective features (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The traditional model is based on the assumption that as teachers learn new knowledge and information based on the most recent best practice research in the field, it would impact their professional practice and lead to greater student gains (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The literature on professional development in K-12 education indicates that this is not the case. Smith & Gillespie (2007) cited a study that found that after 31 K-12 teachers attended a 6-day workshop only three out of eighteen concepts introduced during that training were implemented. Research has also found that with traditional models of professional development, only 10% of new concepts and strategies presented in professional development are implemented, and that

this implementation declines over time as the excitement of the workshop wanes and the reality of workloads return (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Job-embedded professional development is more focused on creating a culture of learning, or a learning organization as described by Senge (1990). In K-12 literature this is described as professional learning communities (PLC), in the professional development literature it is described as communities of practice (COP) (Lave & Wenger, 1998). In these communities of practice, educators work together for an extended period of time, such as an academic year, working to build content knowledge, and to examine samples of student work that can inform instructional practice (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). One task of these small, inquiry-based groups is to gain insight into student thinking and learning. It is a practitioner-driven, student-focused approach that research has shown to be effective (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Adult literacy educators are often required to teach multiple subject areas, with students who range from the basic literacy level (equivalent of a second grade student) to Pre-GED and GED Prep (equivalent of eleventh and twelfth grade students) (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Their classes can include students who are learning disabled, and students who have learning challenges (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). Many teachers enter the field without formal training in education, or in the content areas that they will be teaching (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). According to the United States Congress, teachers are highly qualified if they have certification and solid knowledge of the content they are responsible for teaching (United States Department of Education, 2002). The Secretary of Education of the United States Department of Education noted that providing highly qualified teachers can only happen if our state

policies on teacher preparation and certification change dramatically (USDOE, 2002). In K-12 education teachers must demonstrate competency in the content areas they are teaching either by passing standardized content area tests, or by having a degree or certification in that content area (USDOE, 2002). While the current structure of adult literacy education is heavily dependent on part-time teachers covering multiple subject areas and does not permit this degree of rigor, it does underscore the importance of teachers possessing solid content area knowledge and competence.

Developing a Model for Teacher Preparation and Professional Development

Continuing professional education “refers to the education of professional practitioners, regardless of their practice setting, that follows their preparatory training and extends their learning.....throughout their careers” (Queeney, 2000, p. 375).

In the broad field of adult education, professional development is referred to as Continuing Professional Education or CPE. Continuing professional education encompasses a range of activities designed to provide education and training that goes beyond providing knowledge and skills, to improving performance abilities that are applicable in the practice of individual professions (Queeney, 2000, p. 375). In the field of adult literacy education, there is little or no preparatory training that takes place, and therefore the CPE that is available provides foundational information to practicing professionals (Smith, 2006). CPE is critical for adult literacy educators to provide the quality of education they want to deliver, however, structural barriers in the field of adult education including low budgets, an overreliance on part-time staff, and the tendency to hire teachers based on willingness versus on credentials makes it difficult to change how

adult literacy educators are prepared for instructional practice (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003).

Adult literacy educators who have little or no knowledge of instructional strategies, little or no foundation in education, and little or no mastery of the content that they are charged to teach are not operating with the professional competence needed to prepare them for the tasks involved in adult literacy instruction (Smith & Hofer, 2003). A model of CPE for adult literacy must bring instructors to a level of professional competence as it relates to their mastery of content and their ability to apply instructional strategies to help their students reach a level of content mastery in pursuit of educational goals.

Professional development for instructors in adult literacy programs is a key component of helping students reach higher literacy goals. Professional development must help teachers develop factual knowledge, and procedural knowledge, and allow opportunities for practice so teachers can master how and when to use educational strategies (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The professional development that is made available to teachers must include what to teach and how to teach (Lucas et al., 2005). A model for professional development then must include a significant amount of attention to developing or increasing content knowledge, or subject matter knowledge. This would include reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies based on the instructors' teaching assignments.

The professional development that is made available to teachers must incorporate features for effective professional development (American Institutes for Research, 2006). Effective professional development practices include 1) focusing on the full scope of

mathematics units versus a singular focus on algebra, 2) designing professional development that maximizes contact time and includes follow-up activities for teachers to provide a deeper understanding of mathematics and literacy concepts, and 3) using a constructivist approach that includes hands-on learning, inquiry based learning, and the use of real world problems (American Institutes for Research, 2006).

Belzer's (2005) evaluation of the Pennsylvania Adult Basic and Literacy Education Professional Development system yielded the following recommendations:

building a shared vision among stakeholders (e.g., providers and users of the system) of the goals and purposes of professional development; increasing participation in professional development; making the system more responsive to the range of practitioners who use it; consciously deciding on an appropriate balance between depth and breadth of offerings; bolstering the factors which support the potential of professional development having an impact on programs, practitioners, and learners; and developing a process for doing and using evaluations of professional development as an ongoing tool for system improvement (p.42).

In 2002 England adopted "subject specifications," or qualifications for their adult literacy and numeracy teachers (Loo, 2007). The Office of Standards in Education (Ofsed) suggested in 2006 that subject specific teachers must learn to use their subject specific knowledge in teaching, and that better training for further education teachers (FE) was necessary (Loo, 2007). The purpose of the training would be to "acquaint trainees with the subject specifications and the teaching standards in order that they

understand and are able to use their new subject and teaching knowledge and skills to teach adult learners in their classes” (Loo, 2007, p. 204).

The challenge in designing a course for educators is to determine whether general standards of teaching practices should be offered in an integrated manner with subject specific courses, or separately from content area courses. Research by Sherman, Safford-Ramus, Hector-Mason, Condelli, Olinger, and Jani (1999) asserts that teachers must be familiar with content and instructional strategies to demonstrate professional competence. Their research produced a set of competencies and performance indicators to guide professional development for adult literacy instructors and enhance literacy instruction (Sherman et al., 1999). The first competency in their study focuses on knowing the content, and having an arsenal of instructional strategies. Diversity awareness is also a competency that is stressed in the 1999 study (Sherman, et al.).

The U.S. Secretary of Education cited studies in K-12 education that demonstrated no statistically significant difference in performance between uncertified teachers and teachers that have obtained teacher certification (USDOE, 2002). However, Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2004) reviewed fifty-seven studies on teacher quality and concluded that a relationship does exist between teacher education and teacher effectiveness. Their review found relationships between teacher qualifications and student achievement across studies where the units of analysis differed, and in studies that controlled for environmental factors such as students’ socioeconomic status and prior academic performance. The United States Department of Education indicated that what has proven to be the most critical factor in student achievement is content area knowledge (2002). While there may be some disagreement between researchers and policy makers

on the value of certification, what is certain is that simply providing certification of adult literacy educators that is not predicated on increasing teacher knowledge (subject area knowledge and pedagogical knowledge) and enhancing teacher skills would not be advisable (Smith, 2006). A certification program must not be a series of steps that teachers must complete, but a model of professional development that encourages commitment to lifelong, self-directed learning that improves teachers' competence, confidence, and skill, and that encompasses the best practices as identified in professional development literature.

There are three models of continuing professional education as described by Mott (2000). The update model positions professionals as consumers of, not generators of knowledge; it has a goal to provide practitioners with information that they must know and this knowledge is typically transferred in a didactic method to passive practitioners (Mott, 2000). The competence model has the combined goal of transferring current knowledge along with other skills to impact professional practice. While this model improves upon the update model by concentrating on skills and competencies that are important in the workplace, it ignores the greater work context in which practitioners learn and practice (Mott, 2000). The performance model acknowledges that individual learners are influenced by their environments and within a network of independent systems. This model also acknowledges that single interventions cannot significantly impact performance within these complex systems (Mott, 2000). While each of these models can prove useful for specific purposes, it is important to note that designing professional development that focuses on building participants' content knowledge, includes hands-on activities that allow participants to practice learning objectives, and is

facilitated by someone who can manage group dynamics and situate learning within the context of participants' work realities is more important than choosing one model of professional development over another (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Mott (2000) describes professional learning as a process that starts with general education with a focus on developing content knowledge, moves to pre-service education, includes some certification of competence, and continues with ongoing professional education. In adult literacy education, there is no pre-service education requirement, and CPE is the only formal vehicle for providing content knowledge (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Effective professional development experiences must allow time for teachers to strategize how they will implement lessons and strategies upon return to the classroom (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). This should also include time to identify barriers to implementation, and ways to reduce or eliminate the effects of these barriers (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Educational leadership has also been shown to impact student achievement because strong leaders were able to build the capacity to implement change (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Educational leaders can create a climate or culture of change within their organizations, and give adult literacy educators the autonomy to change instructional practice as a result of knowledge or skills gained during professional development (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

An important factor in teacher change identified in the K-12 literature is teacher motivation. Teachers will engage in professional development based on extrinsic motivation such as to maintain certification, network with other educators, or to obtain salary increases related to professional development and for intrinsic reasons such as to

improve their marketability, and to obtain new knowledge and skills (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Professional development should reflect teachers' concerns and needs, and planners of professional development should know that these needs are different for each adult educator (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). In 2002 there was a proposal in the UK to require teachers to complete a qualification course in the subject matter that they teach (i.e. literacy, numeracy) that would be the equivalent of one year of undergraduate education and standards for pedagogy (Lucas et al., 2005). Lucas et al. (2005) studied nine universities that offered this course along with a course that addressed standards of pedagogy. The purpose of the research was to investigate the course, and the approaches taken to provide information to the field. They found that the needs of the adult literacy educators differed. New teachers wanted more information related to theory, and older teachers expressed a desire for less time spent on theory and more time spent delving into their subject area (Lucas et al., 2005). The implication from this study is that training and professional development must be planned based on the learners' real needs. Adult literacy educators recognize that adult learners come to the learning situation with diverse backgrounds and experiences; adult literacy educators are no different. Adult literacy educators come with different levels of content knowledge, teaching experience and learning needs.

Adults have different "ways of knowing that they bring to a task (Smith & Gillespie, 2007; Grabinski, 2005), so designing professional development that accommodates these different ways of knowing maximizes the potential for teacher change for the different learners who participate in professional development activities.

Kegan (2001) indicated that the three ways of knowing that are typically seen in adult learners are instrumental ways of knowing, socializing ways of knowing, and self-authoring ways of knowing. Instrumental learners are concrete learners that prefer facts, and clearly outlined learning objectives (Grabinski, 2005). They see the trainer as an expert (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Socializing learners learn best in small groups where they are able to share, and learn from other peers (Grabinski, 2005). Self-authoring learners take ownership of their feelings, beliefs, and learning (Grabinski, 2005). They are more self-directed in their learning and learn best when they participate in their own learning. Professional development that allows for whole group, small group, and individual work would accommodate all three ways of knowing. In addition, experienced teachers may not need professional development to learn how to plan lessons, manage paperwork, etc., however they may need professional development on deepening their understanding of content, current research in the field, and addressing problems and concerns that present within the adult literacy classroom (Belzer, 2005). Novice teachers may need professional development on the practical skills of teaching such as teaching methodologies, adult learner characteristics, evaluation and reporting, and planning lessons around standards and objectives (Lucas, Loo, & McDonald, 2005).

Two of the recommendations for effective professional development include designing professional development that maximizes contact time and includes follow-up activities for teachers to provide a deeper understanding of concepts, and using a constructivist approach that includes hands-on learning, inquiry based learning, and the use of real world problems (AIR, 2006). To this end, instead of the current model of professional development, which generally includes one or two activities per year, an

adult literacy certification program may be a better approach to implementing a professional development program that results in lasting teacher change. Smith (2006) suggested that establishing certification requirements might be a way to qualify and retain teachers who are effective, and provide professional development for new teachers to increase their skill level quickly. Smith (2006) also suggests allowing instructors to participate in professional development to accumulate enough hours in pursuit of certification. The part-time nature of many positions in adult literacy education, the absence of pre-hire certification requirements and pre-hire certification programs, the lack of compensation for adult literacy educators to engage in professional development, and the overreliance on single session workshops and conferences for professional development of adult literacy educators have created the conditions that leave adult literacy educators unprepared for many of the tasks involved in adult literacy education. As a group, adult literacy educators are not familiar with the needs of adult learners, are not equipped to address the specific needs of the 85% of their students estimated to have learning disabilities, and often lack sufficient understanding of the various content areas that they are responsible for teaching. In addition, many adult literacy educators also lack the pedagogical skills needed to design curriculum, or tailor exiting curricular materials to address learner needs. With research demonstrating the strong link between teacher quality (consisting of content and procedural knowledge) and student success, it is imperative that professional development in adult literacy address instructors' skill and knowledge gaps to adequately serve the nearly fifty million American adults lacking basic skills and the millions more who have basic skills but may lack a high school credential.

To determine the professional development needs of adult literacy educators, the field must first gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges of adult literacy educators. That understanding must be obtained by collecting information from the experts on the teachers' experiences, the teachers themselves. The teachers as a group can provide descriptions of the difficulties encountered within the literacy classroom, the knowledge and skills that they need to feel competent at their jobs, and the types of professional development experiences that will impact instructional practice. The teachers are best positioned to determine what teachers need, and best able to forecast how teachers themselves might be impacted by changes in preparation and professional development policies and practices. The aim of this work was to provide that perspective, generating knowledge on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy with the assistance of current practitioners in the field.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In the field of adult literacy education there is no pre-hire certification requirement. As a result, teachers come into the field from various educational backgrounds that may or may not provide the requisite knowledge and skills for instructing adult learners. In this environment professional development becomes the main vehicle for transmitting knowledge to adult literacy practitioners however, the professional development typically consists of standalone workshops which research has shown to be ineffective in impacting instructional practice. The aim of this research was to provide an understanding of how adult literacy educators in a federally funded literacy delivery system and in community based literacy agencies make meaning of 1) the experience of entering the field of adult literacy education, and 2) the experience of becoming professionally developed educators. An additional aim of this study was to describe a new model of teacher preparation and professional development that emerges from adult literacy educators who engage in a process of critically examining 1) the effectiveness of current models of teacher preparation and professional development, 2) recent best practice research, 3) survey and assessment data collected as a part of the

study, and 4) the beliefs that current teachers have of what is necessary to adequately prepare and professionally develop adult literacy educators.

Using qualitative and quantitative research methods to examine their lived experiences from their initial entrance into the world of adult literacy instruction to how they currently practice literacy instruction and engage with the professional development delivery system, it was possible to uncover common themes in the preparation, practice, and continuing professional development of adult literacy instructors that could be useful in planning and policymaking regarding teacher preparation and professional development. The current body of research does not include any studies of the actual experiences of adult literacy instructors. There is currently no knowledge of obstacles that they face as new instructors, uncertainties they may have about the content they are teaching, what strategies they currently use to overcome those obstacles or even what coping strategies they may use to conceal what shortcomings exist in their preparation. Planning and policy decisions, and even hiring and assignment decisions are currently based on loose assumptions that instructors have the skills and knowledge to prepare students to make literacy gains, pass all five sections of the GED test, and continue on to postsecondary education and training. The research allowed a thorough exploration of how instructors entered the field of adult literacy education, how they engaged with the professional development system once they were in the field, how current models of teacher preparation and professional development have prepared them to teach the literacy curriculum to a diverse student body, how their personal development affected their instructional practice, and how they imagined a system that provides the teacher preparation and professional development that they deemed necessary for literacy

instruction based on their experiences. The opportunity to collect data from the field and the opportunity to engage instructors in analyzing multiple data sources allowed for the illumination of the experiences of adult literacy educators that answered the principal research questions:

- 1) What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?
- 2) What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 3) What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 4) What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?

Methods

To adequately describe the multiple realities that exist for adult literacy educators in their preparation for and practice of literacy instruction, qualitative methods that allow for close interaction with instructors is necessary. The current body of research on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education has neglected to invite the perspective or input of the adult literacy educators who are most affected by professional development policy decisions. Absent the perspective of current adult literacy educators, policymakers can only hope to design effective models of teacher preparation, and can only assume that professional development activities are providing the education and training that instructors need and desire. Absent the

perspective of practicing instructors there is no way to know if and how prior formal education and current professional development impact professional practice. The use of elements borrowed from the phenomenological approach and participatory research methods provided a genuine understanding of how adult literacy educators make meaning of the experience of becoming professionally developed adult literacy educators, and suggests alternative approaches to teacher preparation and professional development.

Paradigm.

The research was positioned within the social constructivist stance, as well as the advocacy/participatory worldview, as the goal of the study was to gain an understanding of the world in which adult literacy instructors work, and to move them toward imagining a model for teacher preparation and professional development. It provided an opportunity for instructors to describe their lived experiences as literacy instructors, to examine current preparation and professional development, and to make recommendations for what knowledge and skills are necessary to be adequately prepared as an instructor. Analyzing the data alongside practitioners provided an opportunity for the researcher to identify those experiences that emerge repeatedly from the participant data as common to adult literacy educators' experiences. The research revealed the multiple realities of what adequate preparation means for practitioners, and how those meanings are formed by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which instructors practice.

Functional literacy and functional numeracy are social constructs that are defined by the cultural context within which they are situated, and there are a variety of perspectives of what counts. Certain workforce programs set acceptable literacy and

numeracy levels that fall below the GED or high school equivalency levels, and programs that have the goal of transitioning students to postsecondary education find high school equivalency levels too low. The mathematics of cultural groups shapes the instructional practices of the group. This research sought to reveal the nature of teacher preparation, professional development, and professional practice within the cultural context of the program settings within the federally funded and state-supported adult literacy education system, and within community agencies that provide literacy services to adult learners.

The socio-cultural perspective allowed for the researcher's experiences to inductively shape how data were collected and analyzed. This perspective also allowed for the common experiences, definitions, and themes to emerge from study participants. The participatory action worldview allowed for the critical examination of teachers' current levels of preparation, their current professional development delivery system, and their perceived ability to meet the academic needs of their students. This worldview embraces an emancipatory pedagogy that helped participants to see the oppressive political structures that influence their experiences and motivated them to disrupt the status quo (Merriam et al, 2007). The action component of the research was the opportunity to advance a model of professional development through the research that meets identified needs. As study participants engaged in conversation, critical reflection, and examination and validation of study themes, several participants determined that the best way to advocate for the needs of teachers to be better equipped to meet the needs of adult literacy students would be to share these findings more broadly. While participants did not find the present time to be a convenient time to work toward such ends, five study participants indicated an interest in conducting future research, possibly with the adult

literacy students that they teach. Instructors also felt presenting on this experience, sharing both their experiences participating through the focus group and basic skills test, and the study findings would also be a way to increase awareness of instructors' needs with state program administrators, the Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland (the local agency that provides professional development for adult literacy educators), and practitioners at professional conferences. Some study participants determined that other actions might be more appropriate to maintain their anonymity.

Research design.

The study followed a mixed methods research design, which provided an overall understanding of the experiences of adult literacy educators, and revealed the more complex issues that would not surface through quantitative methods alone.

Quantitatively, the study provided descriptive statistics derived from survey data, which described the study participants and the contexts in which they currently teach. These data provided frequencies, means, and ranges of participants' educational, instructional, and professional development experiences. Qualitatively, the research design, although not a true phenomenology, borrowed from the philosophy and approaches that are common in a phenomenological investigation. Phenomenology is a design with a heavy emphasis on philosophy that is commonly used in the social and health sciences.

Educators, sociologists, psychologists, and researchers in the nursing and the health sciences use a phenomenological approach when their aim is to describe the lived experiences of a group of people, and offer a meaning of the group's common experiences of a phenomenon, and the essence of that experience (Creswell, 2007).

In a true phenomenological design the researcher collects data from participants,

and reads the participant responses to develop a full picture of the experience under study. The researcher then looks for significant statements in the participants' words, and works to identify emergent themes that recur across participant responses (Creswell, 2007; Goulding, 2004). Next, these themes and interpretations are provided to the study informants for validation. Based on this validation the researcher can provide the essence of the description or explanation of the behavior. The researcher in a true phenomenological study would return to the participants again for validation, and to identify new themes, repeating this process until no new theme categories emerge (Creswell, 2007; Goulding, 2004).

In this study, the researcher first identified significant statements and then relevant themes from the quantitative data, identified significant statements and then relevant themes from the focus group data, and returned those combined themes to the focus group participants for validation. Next the researcher conducted subsequent interviews with participants who were initially scheduled to participate in the focus groups to member check existing themes, and to determine if new themes were identified. These participants were interviewed, and also asked to review the themes that emerged from the surveys and focus group session. When no new themes emerged from those interviews, the researcher concluded data collection and began working to provide a final description of the essence of the experience of adult literacy educators. The study sought to describe the essence of the experience of adult literacy educators as they entered the field and engaged in the practice of adult literacy education, and was shaped by the four phenomenological perspectives, or presuppositions.

The first philosophical perspective of a "return to the traditional tasks of

philosophy....a search for wisdom” (Creswell, 2007) shaped the study in that there was not a heavy emphasis on scientism. The approach draws from the philosophy of pragmatism which stresses knowledge derived from observation and experience over tradition and authority (Merriam and Brockett, 2007). The study focused on identifying the common experiences of adult literacy instructors through their lived experiences of entering the field of adult literacy education and engaging in professional development within adult literacy programs, by identifying significant phrases that emerged from participant accounts of their experiences of becoming professionally developed instructors. Meanings of the experiences were formulated by clustering these significant statements into themes that were common to each participant’s accounts of teaching adult literacy courses, and presenting these significant statements and themes in table form. The themes were then used to provide an exhaustive description of the essence of the experiences of literacy instructors’ practice, and also provided a description of how they experienced the practice of instruction within the cultural context of adult literacy programs. The philosophical perspective of “philosophy without presuppositions” was reflected in the nature of the study which focused on suspending judgments, and withholding conclusions until the data revealed that conclusions could be drawn, and participants validated that those conclusions adequately and accurately reflected their experiences. Similarly, the philosophical perspectives of the intentionality of consciousness and the refusal of the subject-object dichotomy was demonstrated by the researcher’s restraint in constructing reality, and in the invitation for the instructors to actively participate in constructing reality based on their critical review of the current system, best practice literature, and their current beliefs about their preparation for

instruction. Reality was defined within the meaning that participants ascribed to the realities of instruction and professional development as they consciously experienced them.

The study followed the transcendental approach used in phenomenology advanced by Moustakas in 1994, as presented by Creswell (2007). The transcendental approach was appropriate to this study because it seeks to bracket the experiences and interpretations of the researcher, and allow for a new or fresh perspective of the phenomenon of interest. In this case, where the researcher is a former adult literacy educator, within the same system investigated under this study, to gain a fresh perspective, the focus was on the experiences of the participants, and not on the interpretations of the researcher. I bracketed out my own personal experiences, and worked to provide textural descriptions of what participants experienced, structural descriptions of how they experienced entry into the field, how they experienced the professional development in adult literacy programs, and a composite description of the essence of the experience of adult literacy educators in their practice that permits non-instructors to understand how instructors experience teaching literacy and numeracy concepts to adult learners.

Researcher as instrument.

When a researcher acknowledges their own experiences and the biases that result from those experiences in a study, and acknowledges that their own values are brought to the research it is referred to as reflexivity (Creswell, 2007; Lather, 1986). Researchers use reflexivity to situate their research within the context of their own cultural influences. Researchers acknowledge the influence of their own race, gender, politics, biases, and

experiences on the study. Reflexivity stresses the co-construction of knowledge, between the researcher and the participants, versus advancing the interpretations of the researcher as truth. It acknowledges multiple realities, and the contexts of those realities.

I worked as an adult literacy instructor for three years, either as an employee or volunteer tutor. My entry into the world of adult literacy education was in response to a frantic phone call from a program that lost their GED teacher on a Friday afternoon and needed someone to show up on Monday morning and work with students for the last month of their program year. The program director was not able to provide any information on what the students were studying, no lesson plans or curricular materials from the previous teacher, or any guidance on student literacy levels. She could not provide access to the classroom and the materials that were on site, and had no suggestions for how I could prepare. All she could tell me was that the students were all young, single mothers, and that they were studying for the GED exam.

I had a degree in elementary education with a concentration in special education, but all of my work experience up to that point was in student development in higher education, or in corporate leadership and diversity training. I knew absolutely nothing about adult literacy education, and had two days to prepare for students about whom I knew nothing. I spent the weekend researching adult literacy, and flipping through GED books to at least familiarize myself with the test. Due to my SAT scores, I did not have to take mathematics in college, so I had not had a mathematics class since high school. I spent a lot of time that weekend becoming reacquainted with the mathematics material in preparation for Monday morning.

On Monday morning I initially engaged the students in conversation to try to

gauge where they were in terms of the material so I would have some idea of where to begin, and to build a rapport with them. Through our conversation, I realized that they felt abandoned by their former teacher, abandoned by the educational systems of which they had previously been a part, and they had very low expectations for me as well. They were not hopeful of passing the GED test. They seemed to have no confidence in their abilities to learn, particularly in mathematics, and they seemed to have no confidence in me as their teacher. As I faced these six women, all young, Black, undereducated, and all mothers, I felt that the only way I could be successful was by creating new experiences for them that changed their views on education; experiences that proved that they could learn, that they could learn mathematics, and that they could and would pass the GED test. As I stood before them, a Black mother myself, recently divorced, knowing that the odds are against the children from single parent homes, particularly if the parents are uneducated and of low socioeconomic status, I determined that I would do everything I could to help them learn, to help them love learning, and to encourage them to make learning a family affair.

I felt that I had to convince these students to love mathematics if they were going to master it, to love learning if they were going to become lifelong learners. I felt that they would only be excited about mathematics if I showed excitement about mathematics. They would only show excitement about history if they saw how it could potentially touch their lives today. I felt they would only be excited about writing if they viewed it as a tool for expression and perhaps a tool for change. As I reviewed the mathematics, science, and social studies lessons that I hated in high school in preparation for their lessons, I found that I did love mathematics, science, and social studies once I

understood the concepts, and so my approach to instruction was to get them to understand the general concepts before moving to computation or vocabulary, or reading passages to test reading comprehension. I did develop a genuine excitement about mathematics, social studies, science, and writing, and it was not long before I began to win my students over. By the end of that month, one of the six students did take and pass the GED exam.

From my experience teaching these young mothers I developed the perspective that adult education was a second chance for many, not just a job for myself. I believed that all students had the potential to learn, that the K-12 system somehow was unable to serve their needs, and that it was my responsibility to find ways to reach them. I also believed that I was empowering individuals to create better lives for themselves and their families. I believed that by teaching parents I could help them be better teachers and to be better educational advocates for their children. I took my responsibilities very seriously, and because my goal was education as a whole, not just helping students pass the GED, we covered many topics that were built to give a strong educational foundation, versus focusing just on the skills in the GED book. I drew upon my experiences as a learner, as a mother, and as a student clinician working with special needs children. I drew heavily upon my intuition, and upon my special education training. I incorporated many supplemental materials, particularly those related to increasing financial literacy. This initial experience completely shaped my approach to adult literacy education, and helped me to develop a progressive philosophy of education. Within this philosophy, drawn from the philosophy of pragmatism, and advocated by John Dewey, educators view the role of education as empowering individuals so that they are able to advocate on their own behalf (Merriam & Cafarella, 2007).

In my second experience in adult education, I learned that although many adult literacy educators shared the philosophical perspective, progressivism did not drive them in the same way that it drove me. I team-taught a course for twelve months, and coordinated a program for eighteen months. My experiences co-teaching and my experience as a program coordinator afforded me the opportunity to observe other instructors in their practice of instruction. I was able to observe new instructors, as well as thirty-year veterans in the field of adult literacy education. The programs used traditional instruction, computer aided instruction, or a combination of the two. What I noticed during those formal (as a coordinator) and informal (co-teacher) observations was that instructors used a very hands-off approach to instruction, relying heavily on GED books and technological tutorial programs to teach content to students. Rather than supplementing instruction, the GED books and technology programs were the predominant tools of instruction.

The GED was initially intended to be a vehicle for soldiers who left school to serve the country in World War II to demonstrate high school level competence upon their return from war for the purposes of obtaining employment or entering postsecondary education (Quinn, 2002). The materials were created to help soldiers review material they had previously covered in school. The lessons were not created to be instructional. Those materials have not changed, however the population accessing literacy services has changed. The GED was never intended to be a substitute for school, and therefore does not provide the coverage of materials that students would normally receive in school. GED lessons are typically one page of directions, followed by a page of practice problems. The materials in and of themselves are not a substitute for years of

education, and are not sufficient for instruction of learners with low literacy levels.

As I observed interactions between instructors and students who had questions about writing essays or who had difficulty understanding the mathematics, I saw very little use of alternative methods of instruction, no use of manipulatives or real-world situations, and incorrect teaching of mathematical procedures. The focus was not on developing conceptual understanding of mathematics, diagnosing habitual errors in student writing, or on identifying a purpose for writing, but on rote memorization of computational steps, grammatical rules, and formulas that were lifted from the pages of the GED review books. I worked with some colleagues, sharing approaches to demonstrating certain concepts that I found to be helpful, and reassigned others when it was clear that they were not comfortable teaching all content areas, but I became very interested in different ways that instructors approached instruction, the coping strategies that they used when their understanding of content did not permit them to help students, and the amount and type of training that teachers had in mathematics in particular and education in general. I began to notice that the resource shelves were lined with GED review books and practice books, but no books that provided instructional materials on how to understand concepts to which learners had not been previously exposed.

Dictionaries and thesauruses were provided for each class, but I seldom saw instructors encouraging students to use them. Atlases, encyclopedias, and other reference books were absent. Some sites had video libraries of lessons to supplement lessons; in three years I never saw them used.

I approached a local literacy agency about some of my own experiences with feeling I didn't have enough content knowledge as a new teacher, and about my

observations of other instructors to see if they had made similar observations while in the field, and to see if they offered training for educators in pedagogy and in content mastery. One of their consultants reviewed some of the lessons that I used and presented me with the opportunity to create a workshop that addressed numeracy development in adult learners. I researched numeracy in preparation for the workshop, and learned that there was a great deal of information and resources, but at that time I did not find much research on adult learners. The workshop received very positive feedback, and a member of the planning committee of the upcoming conference sponsored by the Ohio Association for Adult and Continuing Education (OAACE) approached me and asked if I would be willing to present a similar workshop at their upcoming conference. During some of the activities that I used during that conference presentation, I found that current mathematics teachers, some of them with twenty or more years of experience teaching mathematics, could not recall simple formulas and procedures, and could not perform operations that they were currently teaching.

I realized that it was not just my colleagues and I at my site, but my colleagues throughout the state, who were struggling with instruction, particularly in mathematics, and therefore struggling to teach students effectively. Their definitions of literacy education seemed to be limited to the specific content and procedures outlined in GED review books, and their practice of GED instruction seemed to be limited to photo copying lessons for students to complete, tracking attendance and facilitating the rote memorization of mathematics procedures to students. I have seen the same in subsequent workshops, and have come to realize that many adult literacy educators were not formally trained in education, not formally trained in mathematics or mathematics instruction, and

were not familiar with teaching methodology or adult learning theories. Many teachers, like me, had not had a mathematics, science or social studies course since high school or undergraduate school many years before. It came as no surprise then that many students who felt ready to sit for the GED tests always came back with mathematics scores that were too low to allow them to pass the GED test. The GED staff would often say, “They do fine until they get to that mathematics,” or ‘if they could just learn to write a good 5-paragraph essay.’” Instructors appeared to be baffled by this, but it became very clear to me that students never did understand the mathematics; they simply memorized steps that were presented to them by their instructors, and had forgotten them by the time they were ready to sit for the test. Similarly, the students did not understand how their writing skills fell short. This became even clearer to me over the next several years as I conducted professional development workshops and found current instructors lacked understanding of basic mathematics concepts and the conventions of modern English that are presented in the main GED books used at program sites.

As a former member of the adult literacy system, my belief is that the prevailing culture within the current delivery system is too heavily focused on program accountability, so the prevailing classroom culture consists of providing students with just enough skill to pass the GED test versus on learning and instruction. This practice of focusing on only those skills required to pass the GED test limits the definition of functional literacy and numeracy within adult literacy programs. This limited focus is partially due to the fact that the materials that are available to new teachers are materials that are solely designed for GED preparation, and partially due to the fact that many teachers are not trained as educators, nor proficient enough in the content areas that they

are charged to instruct to extend lessons beyond the tasks required for success on the GED test. Teachers often enter into adult literacy education as if “by accident,” meaning that it was not their chosen career path (Smith & Hofer, 2003). They are handed whatever materials are present, and in the words of a past workshop attendee “try to stay one lesson ahead” of students. Teachers are not masters of the content areas they are teaching, especially in mathematics; they simply follow computational procedures as outlined in GED texts. Students then learn the same computational procedures, with no conceptual understanding. This orientation limits the scope of the curricula, the type of instruction typically observed in literacy classrooms, and therefore the quality of instruction that students receive in many adult literacy classrooms.

The quality of instruction is a function of the amount of skill teachers possess (Darling-Hammond and Youngs, 2002; USDOE, 2002). As a former employee of this system, my experience was that the skill levels of instructors varied greatly both among and within content areas. In addition, the supervisors of teachers were not trained educators, and were not able to provide curricular or instructional guidance to instructors. These supervisors were often unaware of the classroom practices of instructors. The state conference of the professional organization to which most instructors belong, counts as a professional development activity, and many instructors and administrators use that conference as their professional development activity, meaning that they can attend a forty-five minute conference session as their professional development for the year. That conference occurs in the spring, just a few weeks before the end of the program year. There is very little motivation to implement any skills and strategies learned that close to the end of the year and the likelihood of fall implementation for teachers who do not

teach over the summer is very low (Smith and Gillespie, 2007). There is currently no accountability for the learning that professional development is designed to promote, and no practical expectation for the application of knowledge and skills to the instructional context. In my experience, there were not many opportunities to improve instructional practice or content knowledge, and improving instructional practice did not appear to be a priority. Working for two separate organizations, I did not gather from either experience that there was a culture or expectation of excellence in instruction.

Helping students with social studies and science concepts was another experience that really shaped how I began to think about the preparation and professional development of teachers in adult literacy education. I assigned topics to different student pairs, and asked them to read the material, summarize the passages in their own words, and prepare to share what they had learned to the class. As they wrote students would often ask how words should be spelled, and I would ask them, “What do you hear?” When students still struggled, I realized that some of them might be struggling with more basic reading components such as phonemic awareness. I was able to draw from my speech and language training in undergraduate school, and I began doing phonemic awareness and phonics awareness screenings with students, and was surprised to find that some of my adult students were still struggling with letter-sound combinations. I began assembling materials to really target all five components of reading, even though our books only focused on comprehension. I wondered how many students were sitting in classes struggling to comprehend passages that they could not even read, and how many instructors were assuming poor readers simply were not trying hard enough to comprehend passages. Without the luxury of a speech and language background to point

me in the right direction, I might have continued focusing on comprehension as well. My whole experience of teaching adults was basically trial and error, with some assistance from my undergraduate study and field experiences. It made me wonder how the teachers who did not have that background bridged the gap between what students needed in terms of conceptual understanding and learning tools and what instructors were able to provide.

These experiences are what led me to want to explore this topic in greater detail. With an increasing emphasis on the importance of literacy and numeracy skills, increased expectations for functionally literate and numerate postsecondary students and a functionally literate and numerate workforce, and an expected increase in demand for literacy instruction in adult literacy programs due to high drop-out rates in urban school districts, it is critical that adult literacy programs re-examine teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy instruction. Further, given that it is estimated that 50-85% of adult literacy students are also affected by learning disabilities (National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Summer 1995) it is important that instructors have an arsenal of tools and approaches for working with those students, and a good working knowledge of mathematics concepts, and social studies and science content to accommodate the needs of students. In my limited experience, it appears that this is not the case within the current adult literacy system. It is clear that the need exists to first understand the experiences of adult literacy instructors before research can progress to designing and evaluating appropriate instructional interventions.

In an effort to manage subjectivity as the principal researcher on this project, I kept a self-reflective journal as a strategy to facilitate reflexivity, and as a tool to record

and examine my own assumptions, biases, and beliefs throughout the study, and to make those assumptions, biases and beliefs known to others (Ortlipp, 2008). I recorded reflections about decisions, changes to methodology, theories and conceptions about significant statements and emergent themes, and changes made in response to participant responses. I acknowledged that as the main data collection instrument, I was not neutral to adult literacy education, and that my experiences influenced the research design decisions and data analysis. The self-reflexive journal helped manage subjectivity by encouraging a level of questioning as to the origin of emergent themes; in other words, themes that did not emerge from participant data, even if they were a part of my experience and beliefs, or were documented in the literature, were not included in study findings. In addition, decisions about which statements were significant were made based on the frequency that statements emerged, based on how strongly participants emphasized certain phrases, and based on the amount of time that focus group participants spent on topics during the focus group activity. Triangulation with participants was another tool for recalibrating; for ensuring that my own assumptions and beliefs did not prevail, and that the study reflected the experiences of the participants. The participatory methodology also helped manage subjectivity.

Setting.

Data for the study were drawn from literacy practitioners at multiple program sites in Ohio, operating under the Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) system, and within community organizations that are not funded by the state. These data were collected in three phases: 1) through an online survey, 2) from a small focus group of eight instructors that consisted of instructors from within the state-funded system and

instructors from community literacy providers that are not within the state-funded system, and 3) through interviews of twelve additional instructors who initially agreed to participate in a focus group, but were later unable to meet the time commitment. Data for the eight members of the focus group were obtained from an online basic skills assessment, the online survey, and through a focus group activity, which we referred to as a “research question round robin,” held at Cleveland State University. The rationale for each of these sources of data, and explanations of what each contributed to addressing the research questions is explained later in this section.

Participants.

All study participants were required to have at least one year of experience as an adult literacy instructor. Participants ranged in age from 27 to 74, the typical age range of adult literacy instructors. Study participants consisted of three groups of instructors, one group consisting only of instructors from the state funded system, and two groups consisting of a mix of instructors from within the state-funded system and from community agencies that are not state-funded. The role of each group, and the data sources to which they contributed as described below are illustrated in Appendix B.

Survey only group.

The State ABLE Director granted permission to survey instructors throughout the State of Ohio. Participants in this group were referred to as the “Survey Only group.” The group consisted of a pool of instructors who are currently teaching literacy classes within the state-funded system. This group was invited to participate in the quantitative portion of the study, and was invited to complete an online survey. Only seventeen respondents completed the survey, which was available for four full weeks. The State

Director distributed the surveys to instructors through the Regional Resource Center Directors, and the Resource Center Directors sent reminder e-mails the following week. The survey was distributed within a week of the State distributing two of its own surveys to State ABLE staff. This may have contributed to the low response rate. The responses were analyzed to provide a broad description of the experiences of adult literacy instructors from within the ABLE system.

Focus group.

Participants in the focus group portion of the study included eight adult literacy instructors from the northeast region of Ohio. Three of the participants were members of the state-funded system, and the remaining instructors represented community agencies that are not state-funded, but provide literacy services to adult learners. The sample size selected was based on the recommendations of Creswell (2007) who recommends 5 to 25 participants. Participant schedules varied in the number of hours that instructors teach each week. Complete demographics of the focus group participants are described in the following chapter of this work.

Interview participants.

Interviews were conducted with twelve instructors, four who work for the State-funded system, and eight who work for community agencies that provide adult literacy services as a component of their overall program offerings. These participants were initially identified as potential focus group members, and when their schedules would not allow focus group participation they agreed to participate through interviews. Interviews were conducted after the surveys and focus group activities were completed. Interviews were held at participant program sites.

It was anticipated that the focus group and interview samples would consist primarily of African-American female instructors from sites located on the east side of the city based on the professional relationships previously established with the researcher through attendance at workshops, however, attempts were made to include as diverse a group as possible. The researcher attempted to collect data from a group that was diverse by age, gender, and experience.

Most of the focus group and interview participants had attended at least one workshop that I facilitated in the last calendar year through the Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland. The Literacy Cooperative has provided three workshop series (six to nine sessions each) for adult literacy instructors in the last three years. The workshops are offered free of charge to participants, and are offered on Friday mornings when most programs do not hold classes. Instructors who participate in these workshops may or may not be compensated by their organizations for their time. I have worked previously to build rapport with instructors primarily through those experiences, and through membership in the Instructors' Learning Network (ILN), an organization created by the Literacy Cooperative in 2006 in response to a small group of instructors who expressed an interest in maintaining contact with other instructors in the area. The Instructors' Learning Network hosts learning circles and networking events for instructors throughout Northeast Ohio three or four times each year. From my role as a workshop facilitator and my role as the Steering Committee Chair of the ILN, I have been able to build relationships with potential participants, so gaining entry did not pose a significant challenge. Each participant received letters of informed consent (Appendices F, G, and H) that assured participants of anonymity and of the non-evaluative nature of the study.

Selection procedures.

All study participants self-selected into the study. Participants in the “Survey Only” group were selected using criterion sampling with the main criterion being that they are current literacy instructors within the state funded delivery system with at least one year of experience teaching in the adult literacy context, who were willing to participate in the study. Participants in the Focus Group and Interview Only group were selected using purposive sampling, with the researcher targeting instructors who would be easy to recruit for the study. These participants have an existing relationship with the researcher, are familiar with the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator, and live and work in close proximity to the location where the focus group was held. Each of these instructors also had at least one full year of experience teaching adult literacy educators.

Recruitment.

Recruitment for the Survey Only group consisted of contacting instructors through the State ABLE Administrative staff, with the support of the State ABLE Director. Potential participants received written requests for their assistance with the study from the Resource Center Directors who are responsible for designing and tracking professional development for the State. This communication also included a description of the focus group portion of the study for participants who might have been interested in becoming more involved in the study, and representing the perspective of ABLE instructors in the focus group. One participant from the Survey Only group expressed interest in participating in the focus group, but was out of town during the end of May and beginning of June when Focus Group activities were planned.

To recruit participants for the Focus Group, the researcher made contact with instructors from within and outside of the state-funded system who have participated in professional development activities facilitated by the researcher in the last calendar year. The researcher made initial contact over the past few years, asking instructors if they would be interested in participating in research about teacher preparation and professional development, and getting their permission to contact them at a later date. The next interaction occurred via an informational e-mail inviting them to participate in the study. The communication described the nature of the study, provided a link to a doodle poll, and provided a link to the online study. The doodle poll is an online tool that allows event planners to create and distribute a web-hosted calendar of possible meeting dates to participants who are then able to indicate their own availability to meet. The online survey (Appendix C) is an online data collection tool that allows researchers to collect data in a secure, web-hosted environment. The first question on the online survey was the informed consent letter. Once consent was provided participants were allowed to proceed through the remainder of the survey. All participants were instructors who are currently being paid to provide literacy education for the federally funded and State-run literacy system, or a community based literacy provider that is not state-funded. All participants personally agreed to participate in the study. Instructors who elected to participate in the focus group portion of the study also received additional information on logistics of the study (location, time, date).

Researcher roles and relationships with participants.

The majority of participants in the study had the role of providing data in the form of surveys. A small group of participants also had the role of co-researchers for the

participatory action research portion of the study since the purpose of this study was to describe the experience of adult literacy instructors, and provide a model for teacher preparation and professional development based on data and best practice research. In this role, the participants reviewed a summary of project data, participated in a focus group or, and worked to formulate a definition based on their experiences and analysis of the survey data and basic skills assessment scores of what it means to be adequately prepared for adult literacy instruction. Participants in this group also worked to envision a model of teacher preparation and professional development that could potentially provide instructors with that preparation. A third group participated as interview participants whose chief role was validating previously identified themes, and generating new themes that did not emerge from the surveys and focus group activity.

Taking leave.

At the conclusion of the focus group and at the conclusion of each interview I thanked participants for their cooperation and participation in the study, and informed them of any anticipated or possible future uses of the findings. Focus group participants discussed additional action that participants might want to take as a result of their inquiry, and decided that, for the present, imagining a model of professional development for the study would be sufficient, but that participants would be interested in future opportunities to engage in research and present findings at conferences and meetings. A small group preferred not to present. We discussed potential changes to policies or practices that could potentially result from the presentation of data to state leadership. I also requested permission to contact them with any updates, to member check conclusions, for follow-up interviews if necessary, or to participate in future research. I provided my contact

information and made myself available to address any questions or concerns about the study that might arise in the future.

Sources of data.

Multiple sources of data were collected for the study. The first data source used was an online survey, completed by the Survey Only group and the Focus Group participants. The second data source used was an online basic skills assessment, completed by the Focus Group participants. Next, a small group of instructors participated in a Focus Group. During the focus group activity instructors participated in a research question round robin, where instructors worked in pairs to respond to the four principle research questions for the study. After each pair had an opportunity to respond to all four of the research questions, the group was reconvened to begin identifying themes as a whole group, and engaged in critical reflection of data and their experiences of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy. Interviews were the final data source, and involved participants responding to interview questions, and member checking the themes identified during the Focus Group activity. The purpose of triangulating from so many data sources was to facilitate validation. Focus Group members validated themes from the surveys and the researcher identified themes from the Focus Group data. Those themes were presented to Focus Group members and Interview participants for further validation. The relationship of the data sources to the research questions is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Alignment of data sources to research questions

Research questions	Survey only group	Focus group and interviews of instructors from State-funded and community providers		
	Survey	Survey	Focus group	Basic skills
What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?	X	X	X	-
What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to instructional practice?	X	X	X	X
What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to instructional practice?	X	X	X	X
What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for instruction?	X	X	X	-

Surveys.

Initial data collection was in the form of surveys or questionnaires. The survey used is an adaptation of The Professional Development Kit (PDK) Needs Assessment Questionnaire created by the National Center on Adult Literacy (2000) and can be found

in Appendix C. The goal of the survey was to provide background information on the instructors' education and training (preparatory and continuing professional development), teaching environment, teaching methods and practices, and professional development. Survey data helped answer research questions one through four, with particular emphasis on research questions one and four, which asked participants to describe the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator, and to describe a model of professional development that instructors felt would be helpful in their professional development. The survey data provided some insight to research questions two and three, which described the contribution of formal education and professional development to instructional practice. This alignment of survey questions and research questions is illustrated in Appendix D.

Basic Skills Assessment.

The focus group participants were asked to complete the computer adaptive version of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), developed by CTB McGraw Hill. The TABE test is the official assessment tool accepted as a measure of student progress in adult literacy education. The computer adaptive TABE is an online version of the accepted standard basic skills test used for students in ABLE programs. The rationale for administering the TABE to instructors was to provide some measure of how well instructors have mastered the mathematics and language arts content that they are responsible for helping students master in adult literacy classes. Test scores addressed research questions two and three, providing information on how instructors' formal education and training and professional development have contributed to their instructional practice by providing a snapshot of the group's mastery of the basic skills

content. The test assessed mathematics and reading competency levels, and presented findings in the form of the standard scores, grade level equivalents, the range of scale scores and grade equivalents, and National Reporting System levels (six levels of literacy used to measure program accountability for adult literacy). The researcher and the individual testers were the only people to see the individual scores, although participants used pseudonyms, so the researcher was not aware of which score corresponded with which individual. Group means were shared with the focus group.

Focus group research question round robin.

The focus group was conducted to provide additional data in the form of detailed descriptions or explanations on themes generated from the surveys, particularly those that addressed research questions one, two, and three which described the essence of instructors' experiences, and the contribution of instructors' formal education and professional development to their instructional practice. The focus group also addressed research question four, as participants worked to imagine a model of professional development that they believed would be effective. The focus group members validated, clarified, and challenged themes that emerged from the survey data.

The focus group was originally designed to be two groups of twelve participants, however, due to scheduling and communication challenges, only one focus group was conducted with eight participants. Participants met at Cleveland State University, and received a brief overview of the day. Then participants were led to the computer lab to begin by completing the basic skills assessment on the CTB McGraw Hill website. After the completion of the test, participants returned to the conference room, and worked in four groups of two participants. Each group was provided with one of the four principle

research questions. Participants were given ten minutes to respond to the question before them based on their experiences as educators. After ten minutes, each pair received a new research question, read the responses written by the previous group, and responded by adding any new information or responses to the newsprint. This process was repeated two additional times until each group had responded to each research question.

Participants reconvened as group of eight, and were asked to identify any themes that they could identify based on the responses. Once the participants felt they had identified all of the themes, the researcher shared the basic skills group scores (mean, mode, range, for standard scores and grade level equivalents). Participants had a moment to digest that information, and were asked if there were any additional themes to add. Participants were asked to think about what instructors should know and be able to do to become teachers, and in the first one or two years of instructional practice. The focus group was dismissed after this was completed. Once data were analyzed and summarized, the researcher provided participants with the summary for member checking of themes.

Interviews.

Finally, the researcher conducted individual interviews of participants who wanted to participate in the study but were unable to attend the focus group. Each participant was asked questions from the Backup Interview Questions (Appendix E), and was also asked to review the “theme tables” for member checking. Interviews were conducted at participant program sites.

Data Analysis.

Data analysis occurred in stages, with the analysis of data occurring in phases throughout the data collection process. This was done to allow for the continual

development and validation of themes. Specific procedures for the analysis of each data source are described below.

Survey.

Data collected from the field via the online surveys were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Descriptive statistics were run on closed ended questions to provide a description of the sample. This typically took the form of frequencies of responses. The researcher read each open-ended questionnaire response to provide a general picture of the experience of adult literacy educators. Then the researcher reviewed participant responses to identify significant statements. The researcher highlighted the significant statements using a different color highlighter for each theme depending on which research question the significant statement addressed. Once all of the significant statements were highlighted, the researcher combined the highlighted statements according to color, which separated the responses by research question. Then the researcher grouped similar statements together, within the document. The researcher created a Word table for each of the four research questions. The Word table had one column for the significant statements that were identified, and a second column for identified themes. Similar significant statements were placed within the same cells. For example, three comments that all focused on not having instructional resources were placed into the same cell in the Word table. Then the researcher reviewed the table, reading the significant statements within each cell, to identify a common theme reflected in the significant statements. The identified theme was then placed in the column opposite that cell of significant statements. This was done for each grouping of significant statements that emerged from the data across participant surveys. The chart

linking the themes and corresponding significant statements were combined with statements and themes generated from the focus group activity, and were presented to the Focus Group members, and eventually the Interview participants, in a table for validation and analysis. From the themes and participant statements in the tables the researcher was able to develop a composite, or textural description of the experience of becoming an adult literacy instructor, engaging with the professional development delivery system, and teaching the literacy curriculum.

Focus group.

The entire focus group session, including the small group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher. Once the transcription was completed the researcher reviewed the transcripts, to get an overall picture of the responses. The researcher reviewed the transcripts a second time noting significant statements, and highlighting them in four different colors based on the research question that the statement addressed. The transcript was then rearranged so that significant statements were grouped according to the research question they addressed. For example, any statements describing the essence of the experience were highlighted in teal, and then all of the teal comments were grouped together under research question one. The researcher then re-read the significant statements under each research question, noting statements that seemed to “hang together” or address the same general ideas, and grouping those together. The researcher rearranged the transcripts so that similar significant statements were grouped together. Then the researcher reviewed the Microsoft Word tables that were created during the analysis of the open-ended survey questions. During that reading, significant statements from the Focus Group that seemed

to fit existing themes from the analysis of the survey questions were entered into the corresponding cell until each set of significant statements was inserted into the table with the themes and significant statements from the survey data that were similar. Once this was completed for each research question, the researcher went back through any significant statements that were not relevant to existing theme category. Each group of statements was entered into the table. The researcher read the comments contained within each cell, and decided on an appropriate theme, inserting it opposite those statements in the table. The researcher shared the resulting tables with focus group participants asking them to review the themes and indicate any themes that they felt did not describe their experiences.

Interviews.

The researcher conducted twelve interviews in the three weeks following the focus group activity to validate themes with additional instructors, and to identify any new themes that did not emerge from the surveys and the focus group activity. Interview participants were asked to answer backup interview questions 6, 8, and 13. These three questions were selected from the entire backup interview protocol because they were directly related to the principle research questions for the study, and were also asked of the Survey Group and Focus Group members. The purpose was to elicit participants' responses to those questions before asking them to respond to the themes generated by Focus Group members. After responding to the three interview questions, interview participants were provided with the table of previously identified themes. Participants were asked to read the provided themes, and were encouraged to read the comments that supported the themes if they needed to for clarification. Participants were asked to either

indicate their agreement or lack of agreement with each identified theme, and were invited to add additional comments or themes. The researcher recorded responses on a copy of the Table of Themes. Responses to questions 6, 8, and 13 were recorded in a similar fashion with the researcher inserting comments into the table with similar responses from previously collected data.

Textural Description.

The researcher then generated a thick description of the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy instructor. This description covered instructors' entry into the field as well as their experiences teaching in adult literacy, and accessing and appropriating learning from professional development activities. The description also included information about what instructors identified as needs of, or recommendations for, professional development. This was accomplished by creating a narrative based on the identified themes, and the supporting comments provided by instructors. The descriptions followed the principle research questions for the study, and included one additional category for comments that the researcher felt needed to be included, but that did not directly address the principle research questions.

Trustworthiness.

I used a self-reflective journal, multiple data sources, and triangulation with participants to ensure the trustworthiness of this study. The dependability of the study or the extent to which it can be replicated was accomplished by clearly outlining methodology (Shenko, 2004), including adjustments that I made to methodology throughout the study as a result of the inability to convene a second focus group. The credibility and confirmability of the study, the assurance that findings of the study reflect

the reality of the participants (Shento, 2004), was obtained in a variety of ways, primarily by adhering to accepted phenomenological research procedures which include triangulation of the data sources, member-checking with focus group participants, and attending to and documenting the bias of the researcher throughout the research process (Creswell, 2007). In addition, triangulation of the data sources and the focus group with participants using iterative questioning during the focus group to ensure honesty and clarity of answers was also used to ensure credibility. Finally, at the conclusion of the study, I presented the option of a culminating activity (which was optional for participants) to allow the participants to collectively review the study to be certain that the description of the experience matched their experience of adult literacy education.

Ethical Considerations.

The chief ethical consideration for this study was gaining access and negotiating entry. Being a former instructor and coordinator within this literacy delivery system and being a provider of professional development to local instructors provided both benefits and challenges to gaining access. One benefit was that obtaining access to potential participants was facilitated by the existing professional relationships formed over the past six years. These same relationships could have created reluctance on the part of some potential participants who might have been nervous about being subject to scrutiny. Clearly explaining the purpose of the research and possible uses of findings may have helped to put potential participants at ease. In addition, for instructors who might not have felt confident about their instructional practices, assurances that the research was not evaluative but exploratory in nature and that participation could potentially provide information that could strengthen instructional practices may have helped to gain entry.

Initially I was concerned that participants might be concerned with ensuring job security fearing that low basic skills scores or specific survey responses might put them in jeopardy if reported to State Administrators; involving instructors from community agencies and ABLE, and reporting aggregate results helped to reduce that risk. Assurances of the aggregate presentation of basic skills scores may have also helped to remove those fears because they did not appear to be a concern. PAR group participants were asked to help the researcher protect their own anonymity and that of other participants. Providing assurances that the data will be shared in a way that provides anonymity for participants was also important. Stressing to participants that specific quotations may be used (with permission) to provide support for findings, but that these quotes would not contain identifying information may have decreased participant anxiety. Similarly, informing participants that surveys, and other study data are the property of the researcher and that they will be kept anonymous, stored on encrypted files in the office of CSU faculty might have also helped with entry issues. Finally, after it occurred to me that the basic skills test might be a part of why I was losing participants, I began asking just for interviews without the basic skills test. Triangulating analyses with participants and providing access to analysis throughout the process to demonstrate the general nature of findings may have helped to remove any barriers that still remained after the aforementioned measures of gaining entry. Finally, study findings were presented to participants to elicit any additional interpretations of findings.

I thanked participants for their cooperation and participation in the study, and informed them of any anticipated or possible future uses of the findings as a part of the exit/withdrawal strategy. We discussed potential changes to policies or practices that

may result from the presentation of data to program leadership. I provided my contact information and agreed to make myself available to address any questions or concerns about the study. The option of a final gathering of participants was also presented as a part of the exit/withdrawal strategy.

Operationalization of Adequate.

Research question four refers to the “adequate preparation” of adult literacy instructors. This term was operationalized through the research experience in concert with the participants as they reflected on their preparatory experiences and their instructional practice. From the researcher perspective, and based on best practice research, adequate preparation in adult literacy education would include at a minimum knowledge of content equivalent to that which the students must master to successfully pass the GED exam, knowledge of strategies to identify and assist learners with learning disabilities, and knowledge of instructional strategies that target global and analytic learners. Further operationalization based on participant data is presented in the next chapter of this work.

CHAPTER IV

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Statement of the Problem

Good literacy skills, the ability to differentiate instruction to satisfy the diverse learning needs of students, the ability to diagnose student learning problems, and possession of content area knowledge were identified as competencies essential to effective instruction (Smith, 2006). Yet adult literacy instructors are not required to demonstrate these competencies as a condition of hire, and no state has a pre-service requirement for paid teachers that they have a certificate specific to adult education before beginning work (Smith & Gomez, 2011). In Ohio there is no requirement that instructors hold degrees in the content areas that they will be expected to teach, and there is no specific certificate required for adult literacy educators; it is up to individual programs to determine the minimum qualifications required to teach (Ohio Department of Education, 2011).

Without a pre-hire certification requirement, on-the-job professional development is the only formal process in place to help instructors acquire knowledge for professional practice, yet professional development requirements are low, or nonexistent for many

adult literacy instructors (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). When it is available, this professional development typically takes the form of participation in regional or state conferences or one-shot workshops (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Studies have shown these professional development experiences to be ineffective in creating changes in teaching practices (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

Purpose of the Study

The K-12 student achievement literature demonstrates the strong link between teacher quality and student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2004; Rice, 2003). This research indicates that teacher quality is the strongest predictor of student achievement (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). There is a paucity of research demonstrating such a relationship in adult literacy. Finding this link within adult literacy could demonstrate to policy makers that teacher professional development in adult literacy is worth the return on investment (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The need exists for more data about the background, needs, and formal education of adult literacy practitioners to better inform professional development planning (Smith & Gillespie, 2007).

There is a need for studies that document the actual lived experiences of adult literacy educators. These studies can provide insight into how instructors develop the necessary skills and competencies for adult literacy instruction, and how they cope in the absence of skills and competencies. These studies can help identify areas where instructors struggle in their practice, which can inform policy decisions and professional development planning. Searches of electronic journal databases as recently as September of 2011 provided studies documenting the lived experiences of students in adult literacy,

but only one study describing the experiences of the adult literacy educators themselves. As such, many studies rely heavily on the literature that has emerged from research conducted in K-12 settings (Comings & Soricone, 2007). These circumstances underscore the need for additional research on professional development of adult literacy professionals, particularly from the perspective of these professionals. The focus of this study was to provide an understanding of how adult literacy educators enter into the field of adult literacy education; how they make meaning of, or provide the essence of their experiences of preparation, professional development, and their practice of literacy instruction; and to engage them in a conversation toward recommending a more effective model of teacher preparation and professional development based on a critical analysis of the literature, study data, and analysis of their experiences in the field.

Research Questions

The four research questions that follow guided this inquiry:

- 1) What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?
- 2) What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 3) What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 4) What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?

Organization of Data Analysis

This study relied on four sources of data collected from three groups of participants. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the data sources, and the study participant groups.

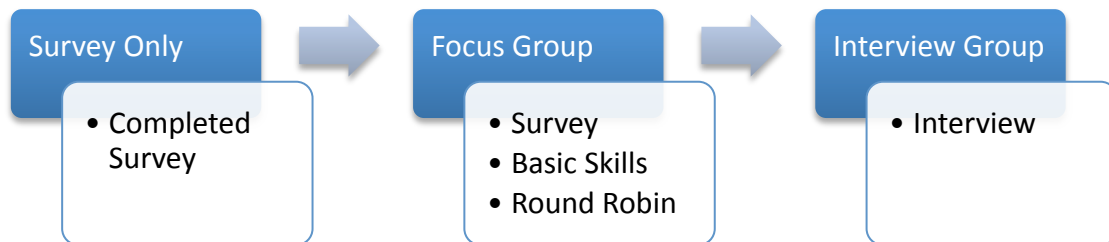


Figure 1. Data sources and participant groups. This figure demonstrates the relationship between the data sources and the participant groups.

The Survey Only group consisted of participants who completed surveys that were distributed to instructors throughout the State. This group of participants did not have interaction with one another, or with the researcher throughout the study. Their participation ended with the completion of their surveys. The Focus Group also completed the survey, however, they also met as a group once during a four-hour focus group activity that involved 1) taking a basic skills test, and 2) participating in a “research question round robin.” During the “research question round robin” participants discussed the research questions for this study in dyads, and then in a large group. Themes from the Focus Group activity were presented back to this group for member checking. Finally, twelve instructors participated in individual interviews with the researcher where they were asked three interview questions, and then discussed the themes that emerged from, and were validated by the Focus Group, adding their assent or dissent, or providing additional statements to support the identification of that theme. Results of the study are

presented in order of the principle research questions of the study, according to identified themes. For each research question, persistent themes are described, and supported by data from the three participant groups.

The first data source used in the study was an online survey of adult literacy educators across the State of Ohio. Data from the survey describe the educational backgrounds of the sample, then their current teaching situation. These data also provided insight into the influence of past formal education and past professional development on the participants' instructional practice. Instructors also provided information on instructional practices that they currently use, and finally professional development activities that they have attended, or would like to attend. These responses are presented with relevant themes that emerged across all three participant groups.

The second source of data was a basic skills test administered to the eight participants in the Focus Group. The average standard score, grade level equivalent, the range of scale scores and grade equivalents, and a summary of the educational functioning levels of the participants were presented. The tests consisted of a mathematics computation test, an applied mathematics test, and a reading test. As such, the data are presented with those themes related to instructors' preparation.

The focus group, or more specifically, the "research question round robin" was the third source of data. Data from the research question round robin generated the themes that provided the basis for the majority of the interview sessions. A series of interviews with twelve adult literacy instructors was the final method of data collection. The data from these two participant groups followed the same theme categories and are presented together, following the order of the research questions.

Description of Participants

A total of thirty-seven instructors participated in the study. Seventeen participants were instructors from the State-funded ABLE program who only completed the online survey. The second group of participants consisted of the eight focus group members who completed the survey, the basic skills test, and participated in the focus group activity. The remaining twelve respondents were interviewed for the study. This group was also asked to member check themes identified through the surveys and the focus group activity.

Age, race, and gender.

The respondents from the Survey Only group are all instructors who are employed by the State-funded ABLE Program. Participants represented at least eight counties in Ohio, two of which are considered to be rural counties (Huron and Perry). The average age of respondents was 53.5, with 36 being the lowest age, and 74 being the highest. This represented a range of thirty-eight years. Ten out of seventeen respondents provided information about their gender. From those ten respondents, eight were female and two were male.

There were eight participants in the Focus Group. Three of these participants worked for State-funded ABLE programs, and the remainder of the participants worked for community based agencies that provide adult literacy services. All of the focus group members were from Cuyahoga County. The average age of survey respondents was 49.5 years, with the lowest age being 27, and the highest age being 61. This reflected a range of 34 years among instructor ages. Five members of the focus group were female, and the remaining three members were male. Five of the focus group members were African

American, and three members self identified as Caucasian.

Of the twelve interview participants in the Interview Group, four were working for the State-funded ABLE program, and the remaining eight were employed by community agencies. Eleven of the interview participants lived and worked in Cuyahoga County. One participant lived and worked in Lorain County. Eleven of the participants were female, and there was one male participant. The average age of the interview participants was 52, with 27 being the lowest age, and 62 being the highest, a range of 35 years. Half of the interview participants were African American, and half of the group identified as Caucasian.

Overall, the combined study sample consisting of participants from the Survey, Focus, and Interview groups represented ten counties in Ohio. Although locations and instructional settings differed, general experiences of teacher preparation and professional development did not. Instructors in the sample represented an older group. The average age of the group was 52 years, representing an overall range of forty-seven years. Given that Survey Only instructors averaged ten years of experience in the field, and the Focus Group Instructors averaged four and a half years of experience, the average instructor in the group entered the field when they were somewhere between forty-two and forty-seven years of age. The majority of the sample consisted of women.

Five of the Focus Group members were African American. Initially there was a concern that this overrepresentation of African American female participants might bias responses. During the analysis of responses from both sets of surveys, and the focus group and interview data, responses from the African American female participants were very similar to the entire sample of participants.

Educational background.

Fourteen out of seventeen participants from the Survey Only Group provided information on their educational backgrounds. One participant indicated that their highest educational credential was a high school diploma. One participant received formal education in adult education. One participant has a degree in the English/Language Arts content area that is a major component of adult literacy classes. The Survey Only group's highest educational levels attained and major subject areas are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Educational Attainment of Survey Only

Highest educational level	Number of Survey Only instructors	Subject
High school diploma	1	General education
Bachelor's	3	K-12
	1	English
	1	Other
Master's	2	K-12
	1	Adult education
	4	Other
Doctorate	1	Literacy
Totals	14	-

Instructors in the Focus Group were also asked to provide information about their highest level of educational attainment. All of the focus group members have obtained a

credential beyond the high school diploma. Two of the focus group members (25%) have a background in adult education. Instructors were also asked to indicate the area of study for their highest degree attained. Degrees and majors of all focus group members are listed in Table 3.

Table 3

Education Attainment of Focus Group Members

Educational attainment	Area of study	Number of instructors
Bachelor's	K-12	2
	Other	3
	Adult education	2
Master's	Other	1
Total responses	-	8

One third of the participants in the Survey Only group, and one quarter of the participants in the Focus Group indicated that they have formal training in education, and all of this formal training was in the K-12 arena. This means that 66% of Survey Group participants and 75% of Focus Group participants have not received any formal training in education. Only one participant indicated that their educational background included formal training in English, one of the five content areas that adult literacy educators typically teach. One participant indicated that their highest credential attained is a high school diploma. This is consistent with findings presented in the literature review that many adult literacy educators enter the field without formal training in education and without formal training in the content areas that they teach (Lucas et al., 2005; Smith,

2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003).

One participant from the Survey Only group received formal education in adult education, and two members of the Focus Group indicated that they also have Master's degrees in adult learning and development. A survey of Masters of Adult Education Programs (one of which is considered one of the top adult education programs worldwide) suggests that these programs are general in nature, preparing adult educators for a broad field of opportunities as adult educators, with adult literacy being one of many possible areas in which program graduates can seek employment after program completion (Cleveland State University, 2012; Penn State University, 2012; State University of New York, Empire State College, 2012; University of Georgia, 2012). The programs typically offer courses that cover the history of adult education, adult learning and development theories, and program planning for adult learners, however these courses focus on the needs of typical adult learners (Cleveland State University, 2012; Penn State University, 2012; State University of New York, Empire State College, 2012; University of Georgia, 2012). As noted in the literature review, the needs of adult literacy learners are different from this population (Reder & Strawn, 2001). These courses then are more appropriate for continuing professional educators or instructors in higher education settings than for adult literacy instructors. While these courses may provide some benefit to administrators of adult literacy programs they are not designed to address the instructional needs of the instructors themselves. Each program has one course on adult literacy that is offered as an elective (Cleveland State University, 2012; Penn State University, 2012; State University of New York, Empire State College, 2012; University of Georgia, 2012). The adult literacy course typically includes a survey of

research on best practices, but lacks a focus on building content or pedagogical knowledge, and does not require students to have a practicum experience as a part of the course design.

Experience in adult literacy.

Instructors in the Survey Only group teach an average of 14.3 hours per week.

The participant with the fewest hours taught four hours per week, and the participant with the most hours taught 46 hours per week, a range of 42 hours. Fourteen out of the seventeen participants provided information about their experiences teaching in adult literacy. More than two thirds of the participants in the Survey Only group indicated that they had over ten years of experience teaching in the field. Survey Only instructors' experiences in adult literacy are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Survey Only Instructors' Experience in Adult Literacy

<i>Answer options</i>	<i>Response percent</i>	<i>Response count</i>
Less than one year	0.0%	0
1-5 years	23.0%	3
6-10 years	0.1%	1
11-15 years	23.0%	3
16-20 years	15.4%	2
More than 20 years	38.5%	5
	Total responses	14

Focus Group instructors teach an average of twenty-one hours per week. The instructor with the fewest number of hours assigned per week teaches 12 hours each

week. The instructor with greatest number of hours assigned teaches 32 hours each week. This represents a range of twenty hours. Instructors in this group had an average of 4.5 years of experience teaching in adult literacy, with the least experienced instructor having one full year of instruction, and the most experienced instructor having ten years of experience. Instructors' experience levels are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Focus Group Experience in Adult Literacy

Answer options	Response percent	Response count
1-5 years	37.5%	3
6-10 years	50.0%	4
11-15 years	0.0%	0
16-20 years	0.0%	0
More than 20 years	12.5%	1
Total responses	100%	8

Instructors in the study reported teaching a broad range of hours, with some instructors working as few as four hours and others working up to forty-six. One limitation to this study was that instructors were not asked to also provide information on the number of classes they teach per week, and the average length of each class. It would have been helpful to know the average length of each course that instructors teach to provide a picture of how frequently instructors have access to each group of students.

The literature review referenced research that has demonstrated that it takes adult literacy learners between 100 and 150 hours of instructional time to achieve a gain of one grade level on standardized assessments (Comings, 2007). Having data on the average length of courses would provide an idea of how long instructors would need to retain students in adult literacy programs to see a grade level gain. For example, an instructor who sees a group of students for four hours per week would need to retain those students for twenty-five weeks, focusing on only one subject area, to see a grade level gain in reading or in math. This information could have implications for program design and instructional design. The information could also provide instructors with more realistic guidelines to share with students on setting their academic and attendance goals.

Sixty-five percent of the combined sample of study participants worked for agencies that are a part of the State-funded ABLE program. The differences noted between teaching at an ABLE site or a non-ABLE site by participants throughout the study were that ABLE instructors have required professional development hours, and have a delivery system for accessing that professional development. In addition, ABLE instructors receive paid prep time. The main difference noted by the ABLE instructors themselves is that ABLE instructors have to complete the government paperwork for each student for the purpose of program accountability. Even with the ABLE professional development delivery system, instructors within and outside of ABLE had very similar experiences with teacher preparation and professional development.

Analysis of Data

The rationale for conducting a survey as a part of the study was to get a sense of the experiences of a larger group of adult literacy educators from across the State of

Ohio. These responses could validate those of the Focus Group or introduce new themes for the Focus Group to consider. The State ABLE Director agreed to distribute the survey to instructors within the State-funded ABLE system through the State Resource Center Network to allow the survey to reach a larger pool of potential respondents, however, prior to the distribution of the survey for this study, the State also sent out two surveys of its own. As a result, the number of respondents was lower than anticipated for the study. There were a total of twenty-five responses, eight of which were from the focus group participants. Conducting the survey did provide valuable information and allowed for input from instructors from eight other counties throughout Ohio.

Study surveys were designed using Survey Monkey, an online survey service that permits the distribution of surveys and the secure collection of data. The surveys were an adaptation of the surveys contained in the Professional Development Kit designed by the National Center on Adult Literacy (2003). The surveys were designed within Survey Monkey so that the informed consent letter was the first question that respondents encountered. Had any participants refused consent they would have been directed to the end of the survey. The State ABLE Director e-mailed the link to the survey along with a brief description of the study to the Directors of the five regional resource centers. The Resource Center Directors then forwarded the surveys to the e-mail addresses in their instructor databases. The results of the surveys from the seventeen members of the Survey Only group and the eight members of the Focus Group are described below.

In addition, the eight participants in the Focus Group completed a basic skills test, and participated in a focus group activity. The researcher began recruiting participants for the Focus Group in April of 2011, sharing the purpose of the study, the anticipated study

design, and outlining details of participation. After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board, the researcher contacted 26 instructors who indicated during recruiting that they were interested in participating in the study, with the hope of having 24 participants. Invitations with information about the study components went out to all twenty-six potential participants. In the end there were eight participants who agreed to participate in the Focus Group. After several attempts at providing different dates and times to hold a second and possibly third focus group, the question arose of whether participants were reluctant to participate due to the basic skills assessment that was a part of the focus group activity. This risk was discussed during the Institutional Review Board Process. Since no conclusions could be drawn about whether this was the case or not, the research design was modified to eliminate that risk and allow for individual interviews that did not include the basic skills assessment. Interviews allowed for the collection of additional data, and the validation of themes identified from the surveys and the research question round robin that was a part of the focus group activity. Results from the basic skills assessments, and the themes from the interviews and research question round robin follow.

Research Question 1: What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?

Instructors' indirect entry into the field.

The first theme that emerged from the data, and is supported in the literature, is that instructors entered into the field of adult literacy through an indirect path (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003). Luke commented on this during the Focus Group as follows:

I don't know many people that actually choose adult education from the beginning. Most people, adult education is not the thing they set out wanting to do. Most people sort of stumble into it or come into it expecting to be somewhere else.

(Luke, May, 2012)

All thirty-seven instructors who participated in the study were asked to describe their entry into the field of adult literacy education. Seventy-six percent of Survey Only respondents provided information on their entry, along with seventy-five percent of Interview Only participants, and one hundred percent of the Focus Group members. Their responses were grouped into six theme categories as represented in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Instructors' Entry into Adult Literacy

Mode of entry	Percent of survey respondents	Percent of focus group respondents	Percent of interview participants	Percent of all participants
Right out of college	8%	0%	0%	3%
Working for schools and saw opportunity for additional income	23%	0%	0%	10%
Referred by a friend	23%	37.5%	22%	27%
Happened upon it	8%	0%	0%	3%
Unemployed	23%	12.5%	22%	20%
Volunteered	15%	50%	56%	37%

Thirteen out of seventeen instructors from the Survey Only group provided information about how they came to be adult literacy instructors. Twelve out of the thirteen respondents who did provide this information indicated that adult literacy was not a field that they actively sought, but that they landed in adult literacy as a result of unemployment, through volunteer opportunities that turned into jobs, through referral by a friend, or through a serendipitous discovery. The findings from the survey of the Focus Group were similar, with half of the participants entering the field as volunteers.

Some instructors had the desire to be in education, and were even trained as educators, but did not have adult literacy in mind before they began working in the education field. Many of the instructors came to adult literacy after working in the K-12 system. Some instructors were teaching K-12 and found out about opportunities to teach adult literacy in addition to their K-12 teaching assignment. Marvin wrote, “[I] taught high school English; was hired to teach an evening class (personal communication, May, 2012).” One instructor elected to work in adult literacy in lieu of teaching in K-12. Stacey wrote, “I did not feel comfortable in elementary education and upon advice from a friend I applied for a position in Adult Education (personal communication, May, 2012).” Still another instructor who was interviewed for the study indicated that her desire was to remain a teacher in the K-12 system, but her disability prevented her from continuing. Margaret shared:

I stayed in the district for two full school years until I had to come out, because I had a disability I needed a scribe and an aid in the classroom and they wouldn’t give me an aid. Otherwise I would still be in the classroom. I taught special education, and I did K-12. So then when the opportunity came up to do

AmeriCorps in GED that was the whole other end of the spectrum but I said, “Okay, sure, I’ll try.” And so that is how I got involved.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

One focus group participant found his way into the field because he had a K-12 teaching certificate but was unsuccessful in pursuing a career within the K-12 system when he learned of an opportunity that was available in adult literacy. Luke commented:

I come from getting a teaching certificate. I’ve never actually been in a school system except for my student teaching. I just kind of meandered around looking for a job for a while and there were no jobs available and I stumbled into the adult education thing.

(Luke, May, 2012)

Joyce’s career in education started on a slightly different path. Her early experiences in education were in a pre-K setting. She explained that participants often learn of adult education because they are in a transition period. She stated:

You’ll start off maybe in one track and you end up somehow working in adult basic education. Because I started out working in a daycare teaching kids and I liked teaching but I knew that I would prefer teaching adults, and that’s when I started to explore opportunities and that’s what I got my masters in.

(Joyce, May, 2012)

Other instructors indicated that they were volunteering to help adult learners and learned of opportunities, or sought opportunities to work in the field. Claire wrote, “I was a volunteer tutor at a church, then decided I wanted to teach full time in this area. I began looking for more opportunities and discovered a teaching position on a city

school's web site (personal communication, May, 2012).” Entering through volunteerism was a common experience with thirty-three percent of participants who provided information about their entry into the field indicating that they sought opportunities to volunteer to tutor. Those volunteer opportunities were later translated into paid opportunities to teach or fill administrative roles within programs. Jessica described how her attempts at volunteering translated into a position in literacy as follows:

I wanted to become a volunteer. I went in to meet with the director of our program, and we talked and then she showed me around. She told me to come in the next day. When I went in the next day she started telling me about the role of site coordinator. I didn't realize that I was the site coordinator. I didn't know I was interviewing for the job. I don't think she knew that I didn't know that. I didn't finish school and say this is what I wanted to do. I didn't know how big the problem even was.

(Jessica, June, 2012)

Some instructors were unemployed and “happened upon” jobs in the field. During her interview Monica related that she was looking for a job after being out of the workforce for several years. She was not looking for work in adult literacy she was just looking for work. She shared the following experience:

I was unemployed. I answered an ad in the paper. T_____ needed an instructional assistant and so I applied for that job and got that job. And that was basically my title until last year and then, so mainly I did the orientation and testing and kind of helped out in the classroom like an assistant teacher sort of. Then in January the teacher here got a different job and I requested to become a teacher at this

location.

(Monica, May, 2012)

One Focus Group participant shared that she was in financial straits and took the position in literacy because she was not in a position to turn down any opportunity. Karen stated:

I came into the field out of necessity initially because what I had been doing previously had gone out of business, and not only had it gone out of business but I hadn't been paid for what I had done. So I was in a bad set of circumstances. But, I learned that I really enjoy it.

(Karen, May, 2012)

Many of the instructors reported that friends or family members who knew of opportunities in adult literacy recruited them into the field. During the focus group activity, sixty-three percent of the members were unemployed, and were told of opportunities in adult literacy from people they knew who were aware that they were looking for work.

Focus Group participants explained that while they may not have had adult literacy in their sites, or while they entered the field through indirect paths, they did develop a passion for the work that has retained them in the field. One participant stated, "I was unemployed for a while and the adult education opportunity came up and I got in there. I got passionate about it but it wasn't what I intended (Debra, May, 2012)." Other instructors remained in the field because they enjoyed the experience of working with adult literacy learners. Instructors felt good about helping students to learn, or pass the GED exam. Jessica shared, "I loved the people once I started doing it, and I loved what the program did for their lives (Jessica, June, 2012)." The literature review referenced

research conducted by Smith (2006) who wrote about the instability of the adult literacy workforce caused by many instructors coming to the field who were not educators by training, and due to the shortage of full-time positions. Participants in the Focus Group indicated that their intentions were to remain in the field of adult literacy education. While their entry into the field may have been accidental, their decisions to remain in the field were made purposely. The Focus Group Instructors identified themselves as educators. Debra commented: “We may have come in through an indirect path, and adult literacy may not have been our initial goal, but we are educators because we want to be educators (Debra, May, 2012.)”

One participant, Elise, who majored in K-12 education, indicated that she entered her position directly out of college, stating, “Right out of college I started teaching a bilingual GED class (personal communication, May, 2012).” Elise did not indicate whether or not she pursued this degree as a way into the field. The remaining twelve Survey Only respondents indicated that they did not set out to pursue careers in adult literacy. Out of the eight focus group members, seven indicated that adult literacy was not their original field of choice. All of the members of the Interview Only group who responded indicated that their entry into the field was not direct. Out of all of the study participants, only one instructor, Edward, indicated that he set out to pursue a career in adult literacy education. He entered the field in 2007 at the age of fifty-five after he lost his position as a maintenance manager at Jacob’s field. He holds a Masters of Business Administration, and obtained a Masters in Adult Learning and Development in 2007. Focus group participants felt this constituted an indirect path into adult literacy, however Edward maintained that this was his field of choice. When asked to clarify his path into

adult literacy, he stated:

I really just wandered or was steered into the Education College at Cleveland State. I loved learning and the academic environment so much I did not want to leave. I had an MBA, but no corporation was giving me a job. The real answer is that God extended my call to missions by placing me in the classroom to serve His people.

(Edward, June, 2012)

This statement, that he felt “called” into literacy explained his reluctance to state that he followed an indirect path. Overall, entry into the field was happenstance. This is consistent with findings in the literature that instructors “happen upon” opportunities in the field (Smith, 2006). The result of this is that many instructors enter the field without formal preparation or training in education, in educating adult literacy students, or in the content areas that students need to know to obtain the GED credential.

Lack of resources and direction.

A second theme that emerged from study data was that in addition to not having formal training in education which could provide instructors with an understanding of the adult literacy population, and a grounding in the five content areas within literacy, instructors often found themselves lacking the necessary resources for instruction, or the ability to use the resources that were available. These included human and material resources. Instructors who participated in the Focus Group activity had a lengthy conversation about the lack of resources at their respective sites. One common experience that instructors reported as they thought back to their entry into the field was that they had no one to show them how to do a lesson plan. As new instructors they

received no guidance, or very little guidance in how to plan and execute lessons. Richard expressed frustration at the lack of orientation to the adult literacy setting and at the experience of having to figure out lesson planning on his own. He stated:

When I first came out of the Marine Corps my first class was an automotive at [a local community college]. I taught it like it was a regular Marine Corps class but I had to learn how to tone it down. Nobody ever showed me how to do a lesson plan. Most teachers they just say “here you go” and you gotta know what to do.

(Richard, May, 2012)

The lack of supervision, or lack of appropriate supervision was discussed during the focus group activity with several instructors indicating that there was no one to supervise them, either because the organizational structure did not provide it, or because their classes were located at a different site, and administrators seldom had time to be where instruction occurred. Liz explained that she had to depend on volunteers in her program in lieu of having a supervisor:

I really had no....no supervision at all. I had nothing. Nobody ever tells you. I just walked in the door and just started coordinating and now I can see that luckily I had people like my tutors who have been in education who said, “Hey let’s start an essay-writing class on essay writing.”

(Liz, May, 2012)

For those instructors who did have supervisors, many had supervisors whose backgrounds were not in education, or who had limited educational backgrounds that did not permit them to provide instructional guidance. Margaret shared:

There’s no support because like as a GED instructor at my sight, my supervisor

just has a high school diploma, so if I don't know something, can I really expect him to know? I have two master's degrees, my supervisor just got a degree in business, but she can't teach me anything about education. One of our members hasn't had a supervisor since January.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

In addition to being unable to provide instructional guidance, instructors who had supervisors found them to be unable to provide assistance with the literacy content.

Karen explained:

No because my supervisor is not going to know more about the geometry than I do. I will seek out where I can go and get help with geometry. We have people in the "for credit field" [at the community college] who will help. They will seek me out now, "Can I help you with anything else?" You have to be willing and go out and create a resource.

(Karen, May, 2012)

While instructors found that human resources were lacking, one instructor (Liz) did find help in other instructors within her service group who were able to provide some guidance. These instructors served as mentors to her, providing her with assistance with learning how to conduct assessments and providing her with orientation materials and instructional materials. Another instructor described being lost in adult literacy until getting help from a fellow staff member.

People assumed that I knew things, and what the program was, and it wasn't until I sat down with _____ that I was able to see the whole picture and how I fit into it. Until then...I was just...I don't know what I was doing.

(Kim, June, 2012)

While some instructors found mentors or colleagues to assist them in navigating the adult literacy world, the common experience was that instructors had little guidance. Instructors had to learn lessons from how to work with adult learners to how to create learning activities largely on their own.

In addition to reporting a lack of human resources, instructors may have had inadequate resources in terms of instructional materials. Some instructors were provided with classroom space and dry erase markers but did not receive instructional materials. They spoke of having to get materials from other instructors because they were not provided once they were hired to teach. During the focus group activity Karen provided the most extreme example of starting with nothing. She shared:

There are no resources. I was on my own. I had to steal every bit of material. I got harassed for making copies because I was copying other peoples' stuff. I didn't even get a book when I first came in. If someone left a copy on the copier I would copy it before I returned it because I had nothing.

(Karen, May, 2012)

Other instructors had instructional materials, or at least were provided with GED books but felt that other resources that were necessary for education were lacking. Debra, who worked at the same site as Karen received more than Karen received; still, she felt that

resources were inadequate for instruction. She described her experience, explaining that the process of obtaining materials has been gradual over the last few years.

I'm still waiting for some of my materials. That's like asking the slaves to build bricks with no straw. I started in 07, and we just had the book, and some markers and that was it, so little by little we got dictionaries, and other materials.

(Debra, May, 2012)

On the other extreme were instructors who were inundated with materials but did not have the ability to select materials that were appropriate for students. Jessica, who did have access to resources found that they did not have the ability to use them effectively. She shared, "At my sites we had a lot of materials, books, and manipulatives, but I remember feeling unprepared. I didn't know what was in what. And at some of our sites, we had very little resources (Jessica, May, 2012)."

Limits and challenges imposed by external factors.

Beyond the lack of material and human resources, instructors found that external factors imposed limits on their professional practice. These limits included society, policies, the structure of adult literacy programs, and the students themselves. Examples of limits imposed by program design included short instructional hours, part-time work hours, and lack of prep time. Student related factors included inconsistent attendance, and the broad range of student ability levels within their classes. Finally, the demand to cover multiple subject areas created additional challenges for instructors who struggled to meet the needs of students in different ability groups in a short class period.

Society

Instructors expressed their belief that societal beliefs create a stigma around the

GED. Instructors shared their beliefs that these misplaced societal values affect student enrollment, attendance, and persistence. Instructors shared that they believe adult literacy education is not a respected field, partially due to the part time nature of the work, and connotations with the night school model. During the focus group activity Joyce stated:

I think there is a stigma attached to adult learning and adult literacy, GED. I think that our culture is very anti-intellectual. We put more of an emphasis on who is popular and celebrity so we don't value education and intellect. A lot of people still have that concept of adult education; that it's like night school. That you are teaching in this part time area so they really treat it like the stepchild of education.

(Joyce, May, 2012)

Instructors believed that GED students are a part of a population that is viewed by society as disposable and that conditions in the field will remain unchanged until the population overall is viewed in a more favorable light. Luke discussed his feeling that legislative opinions that adult literacy participants don't vote are another reason that adult literacy programs are treated like the "step-children" of education. Edward shared his belief that if society placed more value on education, it would be evident in funding decisions. He remarked, "I think that instead of spending \$30,000 per year per man to incarcerate them, and \$10,000 to educate our kids in Cleveland, let's reverse that. And use the money (Edward, May, 2012)." When Helen, who works with a largely homeless population, was interviewed she provided a different perspective on this theme. In her opinion the stigma had more to with the fact that people are lumping GED students into one category, and making assumptions about students as a group rather than as individuals. She explained:

People don't realize that everyone has an individual story. I had a student who quit K-12 because his mom passed, and he basically became "dad." Another was bullied and that is why they quit. People assume that they were lazy or out of control.

(Helen, June 2012)

Kim shared during her interview that she agreed that societal values stigmatize GED programs and GED students. She confessed that before she became involved in a GED program she didn't respect the program and the students in the way that she does now. She shared, "I remember when my niece got her GED and she had a ceremony and a cap and gown and I was like 'what is the big deal?' I didn't know before I got here (Kim, June, 2012)." Luke indicated that the GED population is partially responsible for the perpetuation of stereotypes about GED students and the value of the GED. He believed that part of the reason that GED is stigmatized is because people are not aware of how pervasive the need is, and that students' tendencies to hide from their educational pasts, and therefore hide their pursuit of the GED, allows that to continue. He stated:

Our students may have a general stigma, some of it might be personal shame, some of it might be, I think there's a lot of reasons but I also think a lot of our students are the kind of people who don't want people to know that they don't have a GED. They don't want people to know they have this trouble, and so why would they, the needs stays hidden because the students themselves don't speak about it.

(Luke, May, 2012)

Focus Group participants discussed that the American culture tends to celebrate

celebrity and athleticism over intellect, and therefore students do not see the GED goal as something of value, or something that they share outside of the learning environment. While students may have received support from instructors and other students in their classes, instructors indicated that some students lacked the support for education at home, with some students sharing that they hid their educational pursuits from friends and family who were unsupportive of, or antagonistic toward their pursuit of education. Luke provided an example of how society devalues intellect.

I look at like, the role models that kids are given for who is cool. None of those role models are educated. I saw a movie, a documentary and it was talking about racial issues and it was talking about those early role model issues. Will Smith is a guy everybody likes but on that show he is kind of a knucklehead, he is not serious in school. From a parent, Carlton is a much better role mode for young kids but, he is the loser. Kids aren't given role models anymore about, this is smart, this is how you can achieve, but everyone who watches that show gets that message. There is an anti-intellectualism.

(Luke, May, 2012)

In addition, shame associated with not having a high school diploma motivated some students to keep the need for GED services hidden from the public at large. Instructors saw these influences as reasons that helped them understand some of the lack of motivation that they saw in students. At the same time, instructors did see a definite link between literacy and changing workforce demands, particularly as they encountered students who are gainfully employed, but were told by employers that they needed to earn the credential to maintain that employment. Instructors realized that helping

students earn the GED credential was critical for their ability to gain and maintain family sustaining employment. Instructors saw the link between literacy and changing workforce demands.

One lady came to me and had the same job for twenty-three years as a pharmacy tech. She has worked there since she was, well she is 42 and doesn't have a GED and they told her she better get a GED and get certified as a pharmacy tech now or she loses her job. I had another guy that was at a job for 11 years and they said get your GED, so the workforce is changing.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Policies

Instructors indicated that there was some frustration with policies that exist in the field. The policies didn't match the realities of instructors in classes, or the students' realities. They believed that this stemmed from policymakers being out of touch with the classroom, or not having an instructional experience. Alice lamented, "Policymakers are not aware of the reality in the field (Alice, May, 2012)." For example, Karen indicated that she didn't believe policymakers realized that teaching adult literacy was a difficult task, and that lack of understanding informed hiring and professional development policies. She felt that if they knew how unprepared teachers really were they might require more specific education for adult literacy educators. She commented:

I think it is ignorance on the part of the people who are making the decisions. The policymakers. They assume that people are taking the path that you are supposed to take. I don't think that just because you have a bachelor's degree you can figure all of this out.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Karen offered an alternate explanation for why hiring and professional development policies have remained as lax as they are, explaining that it is also a function of societal values. She remarked, “What is happening that we are not getting, why isn’t there more of a formal process to help us get what we need to be successful as instructors? The same reason that athletes are paid more than educators (Karen, May, 2012).”

Instructors felt policies that required students to be tested before they could enter programs did not take into consideration that learners might not be able to read, or might have had test anxiety. While these policies provided critical information from an accountability standpoint, they prevented instructors from building a rapport with students and providing them with a positive experience before having to subject them to testing. They believed policy makers were unaware of the implications of policy.

Liz and Richard discussed the experience of getting the courage to come back to school, and then getting tested on the first day. They felt the practice presented challenges for instructors as well. Instructors felt administering the test before they knew basic information about the student (i.e. whether or not they could read the test) was a deterrent for students to access services, or to come back after the initial orientation (which impacts instructors’ retention rates).

Liz: I think it’s a kind of big step to walk in there as an adult and say you know I need this. I wouldn’t want to do it.

Richard: Then the first thing that you throw at them is that test.

Liz: Yeah, here, can you read this?

Richard: And maybe I can’t even read. We don’t know that.

(Liz and Richard, May, 2012)

In addition to the assessment on the first day, students must complete registration forms. Instructors like Liz, who are not working for the state delivery system have a different process than staff who work for the state. The registration for the State of Ohio involves a lot of paperwork that must be completed before students can receive services. Richard estimated that the initial registration form is four pages long. Then there are release forms, learning styles inventories, special needs screenings, and goal sheets that students must complete. The process can be tedious and time-consuming, especially for students with very low literacy levels who may not be able to read the forms, or who may need help completing them. As well, he explained that instructors must go through each form for each student to be certain that they are completed properly, which takes time away from instruction.

Unrealistic expectations for student progress.

Instructors indicated that ignorance on the part of policy makers, program designers, and participants often lead to unrealistic expectations. Students and funders often had expectations that students could complete the necessary work and obtain the GED credential within arbitrary time limits. This was particularly true at sites that served adjudicated youth or students who were completing the course as a condition of their probation. Students were referred by criminal justice agencies that provided students with the option of going back to school as an alternative to paying fines or incarceration. The unrealistic timelines established by judges who funded the program put unrealistic demands on the instructors. Liz shared:

And also I think there needs to be a dialogue with to me the probation

department, that a lot of times this is very unrealistic, that he needs to have his GED by March, and we're walking in at a sixth grade level.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Instructors indicated that these arbitrary timelines created additional stress for the students, and that the instructors themselves felt pressured to help students demonstrate learning gains to keep them from being incarcerated or re-incarcerated. Alice remarked:

I told them to tell the judge that may not be realistic because you are on the third grade level. He can't tell you "you are going to get your GED in three months", it's just not going to happen, especially since you dropped out of school in the ninth grade. So in three months, you're going to be locked up because you're inconsistent and the deadline is unrealistic- they're coming just enough to not get reported [to probation officers].

(Alice, May, 2012)

Instructors noted that people did not have any idea of how much went into preparing for the GED test. They shared their beliefs that people mistakenly assume that since GED students are "dropouts" and are able to pass the test, the test must not be difficult to pass. They have unrealistic views of the challenge, and unrealistic views about how long it could take some students to show grade level improvement. Monica said:

Yeah, they all think I can get this in a couple of weeks. And when they come in they can barely do multiplication and division and then they want to know when they can do algebra. It's like whoa! You have to know fractions, you have to know decimals, you have to know percentages. You have to know ratio or

proportions, all of that stuff before you go to algebra.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Limitations imposed by program structure.

Instructors indicated that the way programs are designed presents challenges for them in the classroom. These are often decisions over which instructors have very little control. For example, relying on a small program staff increases instructors' responsibilities beyond instruction. Instructors spoke about the many hats they wore as instructors as an additional challenge. Instructors have a hand in recruiting students into the program and retaining them once they get there. This retention could include advocating with caseworkers for students to receive daycare vouchers, or counseling students on personal issues. Instructors often found themselves conducting orientation if their sites permitted open enrollment and a new student showed up for class.

The decision to use open enrollment is one program-level practice that really takes time away from instruction. With open enrollment, versus managed enrollment, new students can enroll on an ongoing basis. With managed enrollment students are only admitted to class monthly, quarterly, or based on some other pre-determined increment of time. This allows instructors to focus on orientation during orientation, and focus on instruction at all other times. The challenge with open enrollment, especially at sites where instructors conduct orientation themselves is that teachers are required to divide their time between orientation and instruction. At many sites, students have to have orientation before they can enter class, so if a student arrives, the instructor has to conduct orientation, often in lieu of instruction of students who have already completed orientation. During the focus group activity, Liz described the experience as follows:

Yeah we do open enrollment, which I hate. I rely heavily on my tutors to take care of everybody else so I can focus on the new students that are coming in. I'm interviewing them and that I have that time to spend with them when I'm interviewing them.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Another element of program structure that created challenges for instructors was the way that student data was collected and managed. Instructors knew that student orientation packets contained information that could assist them with knowing their students better or assist them with instructional decision-making, but instructors, especially within ABLE, did not always have access to student data. Often programs required student enrollment forms to be stored in administrative offices, which were sometimes housed at different sites than where the literacy classes were held. Instructors did not always have access to this information that could give them insight into students' entry levels, special needs, learning styles, and other information. In addition, instructors were often not made aware of program level goals. Monica shared:

When I meet with the student I see it one time, but I need to get that somehow where I can access it on a daily basis. I myself don't have that information because I am not doing that intake. Honestly, it really wasn't until 3 years ago that I learned the little idiosyncrasies but basically post testing is your bread and butter. I realized that this is what matters to the State. I explained to the instructional assistant, because he didn't know, and I posted their names, if these people ever show back up we have to post test them, and we help each other that way.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Part time hours and lack of prep time.

Instructors found that external factors like short instructional hours and lack of prep time presented challenges. During the focus group activity participants expressed some frustration with attempting to cover multiple topics with short instructional hours. The hours of classes, not student need, influences the amount of time that instructors are able to spend on the different content areas. Richard described this as follows:

Most GED classes are 2 hours so you are trying to cover one hour of math and one hour of science, and then one hour of social studies and maybe back to math and its hard to stay organized. We don't get paid to prep.

(Richard, May, 2012)

Richard's comment about teachers not getting paid to prep introduces another challenge; lack of paid prep time for instruction. Within the ABLE system, instructors explained, programs can pay for prep time, but outside of the ABLE system this is dependent upon how instructors contracts are designed. What this means is that instructors are only paid for the hours that they are in class teaching. They are not paid for designing lessons, preparing materials, or grading papers outside of instructional time. Instructors discussed that while they would like to design creative lessons to introduce content, they didn't want to spend a lot of time working hours for which they won't be paid. To spend four hours outside of class designing lessons for a four- hour class, they explained, cuts instructor pay rates in half. This is even more of a concern for those instructors who are working part-time hours.

In addition to short instructional hours, part-time hours also create challenges for

instructors. As the literature review indicated, part time hours are the rule in adult literacy and (Smith & Hofer, 2003; Smith, 2006). Out of seventeen instructors in the Survey Only group, only one instructor indicated that he or she is employed full-time. Two of the Focus Group members were employed full-time. Two members of the Interview Only group held full-time positions in adult literacy. This means that eighty-six percent of study participants were employed part-time in the field. As noted in the literature review, this is almost identical to the percentages for instructors employed by the State ABLE program (Ohio Department of Education, 2011) and is consistent with findings from Smith (2006) and Smith & Gillespie (2007). This overreliance on part-time staff makes it difficult to require certification as a condition of hire as is possible in the K-12 system. It also threatens the stability of the adult literacy workforce, and makes it difficult to schedule professional development, particularly if sites are unable to compensate teachers for the time they spend in professional development.

Assessment, placement, and learner progress.

Instructors were often left to navigate assessment, student entry levels, learning styles, special needs, learning goals, and daily progress, often in an environment where the students in front of them were not the same from day to day. Liz described a recent experience of testing a student who was found to have a 3.8 reading level and 3.2 math level. Since her site used an assessment that provides grade equivalents without diagnostic information, Liz did not know where to start with that particular student. She said, “And I struggle with, you know, if you have a 3.2, I don’t know where to start with people. Finding the right materials for the right person at the right time...I struggle with that (Liz, May 2012).”

Liz indicated that her greatest frustration was that students expect her to know what they need. She stated, “And it’s like I am supposed to remember like from their file like I’m supposed to remember that you read at an eighth grade level. I’m supposed to know that you’re working pre-algebra (Liz, May, 2012).” Liz also expressed frustration with having to learn how to administer the assessment tool on her own, and being unable to interpret the more commonly used TABE test. Richard shared with her that there are books available to help instructors understand how to interpret assessments, and that he learned how to use the assessments from the book, not from a supervisor.

Inconsistent student attendance.

Instructors experienced frustration with inconsistent classroom attendance and student retention. Instructors spoke of never knowing who would walk through the classroom door each day. This presented challenges, or created more work for instructors. Helen explained that it made it difficult to build lessons off of previous lessons, saying “And it gets frustrating. Maybe not frustrating, but it is juggling. You can’s say, ‘Remember last week?’ (Helen, June, 2012).”

During the focus group activity instructors discussed the reality that adult literacy students faced many barriers to participating in literacy programs. Study participants indicated that conflicting work schedules, transportation, childcare issues, lack of motivation, and lack of family support impacted student attendance. Rose shared, “Sporadic attendance is a problem. There’s no way to make them come. Life happens. Especially when their lifestyles are so precarious anyway (Rose, June, 2012).” Edward had a different view than the other participants on this issue. Instead of viewing life challenges that threaten attendance as barriers, he saw them as excuses, stating:

I just don't like excuses. I've heard them all before, you're not going to be original with it, and furthermore it's no excuse. I'm here every day and I am prepared and if I wasn't you'd report me, so I have the same expectation for students that they expect of me.

(Edward, May, 2012)

These issues, whether viewed as barriers or excuses impacted the amount of time it took for students to reach learning goals, and impacted student persistence within literacy programs. As noted in the literature review, Comings (2007; 2010) reported that mean persistence rates in the United States per academic year average 113 hours, just 13 hours above the 100 hours that studies show are needed to see an academic gain of one grade level, and that this (113 hours) represents one tenth of the amount of time that students spend learning each year within the K-12 system. Instructors in adult literacy are expected to produce academic year gains in a fraction of the time that their counterparts in K-12 settings have access to their students. Focus group participants indicated that they assumed they would only have students for a short period of time. Edward stated:

That is probably my greatest nightmare and challenge is that we have such a short window to operate in because you know eventually you are going to lose them. I don't care if you keep them for six months, everyday is about encouraging, it's about engaging, it's about seeing that finish line for them, using the knowledge like I'm Moses trying to get you to the promised land and you have to build that sense of expectation.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Luke explained this challenge from the perspective of missed opportunities for the students. He spoke about the gains that students could make if they were more consistent with attendance.

One interview participant felt this theme category did not represent her experience at all, stating, “My experience has been different in that area. I lay out ground rules for my class and that is it. I have had really good, motivated groups of students (Kim, June, 2012).”

One interesting observation that I made during the data transcription of the focus group activity made me wonder if student persistence might be a function of instructor characteristics. As I transcribed I noticed that two teachers in particular made comments that I felt were very negative, and somewhat derogatory toward the students. I was pretty surprised by that, and as I thought about it more, I realized that it was even more surprising given that both of those instructors are very open about their religious beliefs, and are actively involved in ministry. One participant was a pastoral minister, and the other a missionary. Both instructors have been in the field for five years or less. Considering this, and instructor comments that it takes three or four years to learn the ropes of adult literacy instruction made me wonder whether instructor experience, and more importantly instructor learning and growth are related to attrition rates. Learner persistence may not be solely a function of student motivation. Instructor characteristics may also play a role.

I certainly think back on my first class and regret that it hadn't dawned on me to do reading profile assessments. I think of one student in particular who went to high school with me, and then became one of my students. She was enrolled in the program,

but did not show up in the first four weeks that I taught. When she did come in, it was clear that although we did not know each other while in high school, we both recognized one another from high school. I made it a point to speak to her privately, to let her know that no one else had to know that we knew one another previously, that I was glad that she was there, and that we were going to get through the class together. Her relief was visible, her attitude was positive, but she remained inconsistent in attendance, missing three or four weeks at a time. Looking back, and remembering that she was in the special education wing in high school, I feel awful that it didn't occur to me until six months into my teaching career in adult literacy (and months after she stopped attending) to do reading assessments. Reading could very well have been her problem, and it is possible that I lost that student because I hadn't yet learned the ropes. I would like to know how much of student persistence is influenced by students encountering yet another teacher who "just doesn't get it" or "can't help me." This is why it is imperative that the field adopts a new paradigm with regard to teacher preparation and professional development. Students who want to cover a lot of educational ground in as little time as possible need instructors who are skilled, not instructors who will "figure it out" in four years. This is critically important, particularly given that study participants indicated that they are encountering more students with low literacy levels.

Lack of student responsibility or self-direction.

Instructors shared that they experience frustration with low levels of student responsibility or self-direction. This lack of student responsibility translated into students stopping out for short periods of time, or dropping out completely at some point during the academic year. Instructors felt particularly frustrated by this when they discussed the

connection between achieving literacy goals and its potential for helping students improve their quality of life. Alice believed that education could impact students' thinking, and subsequently their lives, but felt that was only possible if students attended class so that instructors could impact their thinking. She commented:

If you get that education you can work yourself out of your situation, but if we can't change their mind we can't change their behavior. If you aren't in my class I can't change your mind so I can change your behavior.

(Alice, May, 2012)

Edward discussed his desire to learn how to help students, or motivate them to take more responsibility for their education, and to be more disciplined. He stated:

Even though they are adults the majority of them lack the management or the discipline, self-discipline to get through this course, this subject matter, we need a strategy to develop in them self-discipline and determination.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Students with low literacy levels.

During the focus group activity instructors spoke about seeing more students come in with very low literacy levels. Liz stated, "Most students come in probably at 6th grade or lower, most lower than the 6th grade (Liz, May, 2012). Instructors are sometimes at a loss for where to begin with instruction particularly with students who entered with very low literacy levels. Instructors used varied approaches to selecting instructional materials and determining student needs, and these approaches were based on instructor assumptions, and instructor experiences, not necessarily on best practice research or student data. Monica shared her process for determining learner needs.

I generally ask the student how they feel about their math facts. If they don't feel confident I give them a pop quiz. I ask what is seven times eight, and if they get that one they are probably okay, because that is like the hardest one I think in the middle there, so if they are missing the basics that is where we start. I try to find out if it is the process they are missing or the [multiplication] facts.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Liz indicated that even with access to student data, she was often left to wonder about materials and learning approaches that correlate to different grade level equivalents. "I tested a girl the other day, 23 years old, 3 children already, dropped out in the 9th grade. Tested out at a 3.8 reading level and 3.2 math level and I don't even know where to start (Liz, May, 2012)." Without sure methods of selecting level-appropriate content, instructors found their own way, often relying on the content areas that they were most comfortable teaching, and creating a lack of consistency in what is offered between sites and between classes within sites. Kim stated, "We are all over the place at our site. It's a disservice to the students. There isn't any continuity so if their work schedule or something changes and they have to change classes....(Kim, May, 2012).

Content standards do exist for ABLE. Those content standards provide guidance for what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels, or based on standardized test scores. Instructors in the study, including those employed by the state did not appear to be aware that these standards existed. Kim worked for a community college that has a state-funded program, but she teachers for the literacy program that is not state-funded. She indicated during her interview that she just found out that standards

existed at the end of her fifth year of instruction. She explained that she happened to be looking at a binder that someone from the ABLE program had when she saw the standards. When Kim showed interest in the standards, she learned that the other instructor was not aware that the standards were in the binder, and had not used them. Kim indicated that she thought using the standards would help her know what she could expect from her lower level students in the different content areas.

In addition to the academic impacts and workplace barriers that exist for students with low literacy levels, instructors shared concerns over low literacy levels resulting in disenfranchisement for adult learners. This concern with student disenfranchisement supported findings by Subban (2007) that were presented in the literature review that demonstrated the impact that low literacy levels can have on participation in community affairs in general, and community development in particular. The literature review also referenced findings that the same stigma identified by the instructors curtails resident input in community discussions and decisions, removing their ability to shape the development agenda, resulting in literacy learners losing the opportunity to impact what occurs in their communities (Subban, 2007). Karen very passionately stated:

When you are at a low literacy level you can't advocate for yourself because you don't know how to advocate for yourself; you also don't know the appropriate questions to ask. You don't know the appropriate people to ask to tell you the questions to ask. And as a result you are self-conscious and you're easily defeated if someone looks at you funny or says something to you funny...

(Karen, May, 2012)

Instructors felt it was especially important to recognize disenfranchisement as a possible

consequence of low literacy levels, particularly given that they are seeing definite generational patterns in literacy, with younger generations showing more of a deficit in foundational skills. Liz indicated that she has noticed that students over forty typically enter at the eighth or ninth grade level, with younger students testing in at much lower levels. Edward's experience confirmed this. He stated:

I think a big part of the population we are seeing especially now is even a lower level student now, and they did not have that level of parental guidance in the home. We are seeing students come in now with numbers that are incredibly low, and the battle is longer for them and it is far more difficult for us as instructors, and I look at some numbers and say wow, what is expected of me? Because we know we are not going to hold that student that long. That's another big problem.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Edward theorized about why instructors are noticing generational patterns in literacy levels. He indicated that perhaps the changes are related to a different set of values in the younger generation, or in the parents of the younger generation advocating less for education. He commented:

It almost appears as though those students who had a value for education have passed through and now we are getting that population of students who just have to get it

I would say we have the younger people, the under 30 crowd, a lot more of them know that they have a learning disability, so they'll say I had an IEP in high school, and then the over 30 crowd, sometimes you can just tell that there is like a disconnect or something because like they can do it here, they can't transfer it, so

maybe it is a processing thing, and then just listening to peoples' stories, they'll say that they had trouble in school and never got tested. Their parents were not an advocate for them [*sic*] and they fell through the cracks and were done.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Special needs learners.

Focus group participants and interview participants indicated that they did not have experience with special needs learners prior to teaching in adult literacy. Monica stated, "I have no background with special needs learners. I had to figure out what I could do with them (Monica, May, 2012)." While reviewing the themes from the focus group sessions, one interview participant indicated that he had not had experience or training with special needs learners, but that he had worked at the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and supervised some clients with mental retardation. Working with a student who has mental retardation and working with a student with a learning disability are completely different situations. At the time of the interview, it didn't occur to me to ask if he knew the difference between the two. Richard described his first experience with a student who had special needs. He stated, The first special needs student I ever ran into my first reaction was, "What the ____ is your problem?" "What is your major malfunction (Richard, May, 2012)?" His response demonstrates the need for instructors to receive training on working with students with learning disabilities early on in their careers in adult literacy.

Nine study participants (4 in the Survey Only Group, 5 in the Focus Group) indicated that they have received professional development on learning disabilities in the past year. Monica described her experience with that training as follows:

The LD professional development offered through the State that everybody had to take, and I don't know if it is the same across the state but the one that I took was fantastic. The practical stuff that I learned was just phenomenal. It was real, hands-on kind of practical things that I use in my classes all of the time. I'm thankful for the little bit of LD training and the professional development that I've had because I have been able to modify things like, you know doing an editing thing, and the instruction "Find all the comma errors" and it's kind of a lot so I'll write in the margins, like how many are in each sentence and that seems to help a lot.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Although this training is required in ABLE, it is not required for participants who are not a part of the ABLE system, which means that a large number of instructors are not eligible to receive this training. Out of the twenty participants in the Focus Group and Interview Group who were asked about their background with students with LD, ten participants indicated that they were not prepared (4) or only somewhat prepared (6) to use strategies to recognize and accommodate students with learning differences. Simply put, 60% of the participants did not feel prepared to accommodate 85% of their students that the literature review suggests are likely living with learning disabilities (National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Summer 1995; NCSALL, 2002).

Instructors in the study indicated that learning disabilities screenings are used at their sites as a part of the orientation process. Instructors indicated that students complete the Washington 13 as a part of their orientation packets. The Washington 13 was designed to be an oral assessment tool, but instructors indicated that in most instances it

is not administered orally. One instructor indicated that she doesn't typically administer the Washington 13. She stated, "I don't like to do the special needs screenings, because I can't do anything for them if they are LD anyway (Liz, May, 2012)."

As noted in the literature review, research has found that certain strategies impact the learning gains of students with learning disabilities (Pannucci & Walmsley, 2007). These strategies include connecting learning to students' prior learning, purpose for learning, and interests, scaffolding instruction, teaching to students' learning styles, and teaching meta cognitive strategies. Instructors in the study indicated that they would like to learn how to use information about student learning styles to inform their instructional practice; prior preparation and professional development experiences have not provided them with those skills. Professional development targeted to teach instructors how to accommodate learners with disabilities could equip instructors to use the strategies to impact the learning gains of learning disabled students as a part of their instructional approach.

Professional Development.

Instructors in the study reported that they have minimal or no professional development requirements. Richard stated, "We're not really required to go and get a lot of professional development. A teacher is, in a school system. I have to do one professional development activity each year (Richard, May, 2012)." As noted in the literature review, research has shown that the duration of professional development received impacts student achievement, with studies documenting increases in student achievement after instructors received more than 14 hours of professional development (Smith, 2010). With instructors in the study reporting very minimum professional

development requirements, or no professional development requirements at all, and with the bulk of their professional development consisting of the one-shot workshops that research has found to be ineffective in impacting instructional practice, the dollars currently allocated for professional development cannot be expected to impact student achievement, or instructional practices, and therefore, only serve to meet policy requirements.

Experience in Education.

Instructors have previous experiences in education, or experience working with adults in various contexts. For example, some instructors worked in education, but with the K-12 population. Other instructors worked with adults, but not in an educational context. In general instructors lack formal training in teaching adult literacy learners. Debra was surprised to find that she could find a position without formal training. She stated:

I've taught adults all my life. I didn't have any formal training in adult literacy. I started out as a volunteer. I volunteered all the way through the schools my children attended and tutored every grade along their path, and my husband and I do seminars and conferences and teach adults along that arena so when this popped up I didn't even know that I would be qualified, and the experience is what won me my position because I didn't have the formal training as an adult educator.

(Debra, May, 2012)

To gain insight into instructors' experience in the field of education, participants in the Focus Group and the Survey Only group were asked to provide information about

instructional experience they gained outside of the adult education field. All of the Focus Group participants and thirteen out of seventeen of the Survey Only group provided information about their previous instructional experiences, with all of the instructors indicating that they had some experience in education or training prior to their teaching positions in literacy. The instructors' teaching experiences outside of adult literacy are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Teachers' Instructional Experiences Outside of Literacy.

Instructional context	# of survey only instructors	Participants' experience range	#of focus group instructors	Participant description of experiences	Total number of instructors
Elementary	3	2-37 years	1	Grades 1 and 3	4
Middle school	4	3-10 years	1	English teacher	5
High school	2	10 years	1	Licensed never taught	3
College	2	1-10 years	-	-	2
Tutoring K-12	-	-	2	Over 30 years	2
Substitute K-12	3	9 years	1	-	2

Thirteen instructors from the Survey Only group indicated that they had experience teaching outside of the adult literacy context before becoming adult literacy instructors, with two teachers having experience in three different settings. The majority

of these experiences were within the K-12 system [one bilingual teacher, one reading specialist, one Teacher of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) instructor, and an art teacher]. Two of these instructors indicated that their experiences were with adult populations in a college setting, however the needs and abilities of college learners are different than those of the students accessing literacy services. From the Focus Group, all of the instructors indicated that they had some experience teaching or training prior to their entry into the field of adult literacy. This experience took place in formal and informal educational settings. For example, one instructor was an auto tech teacher for six years at the community college, one was a volunteer trainer, and another had twenty years of experience in ministry. Similar to the Survey Only group, the majority of the experiences took place within the K-12 educational system.

Current teaching situation.

Instructors were asked to describe their current teaching assignments. Eleven instructors from the Survey Only group were currently teaching in assignments that required a state issued teaching certificate. With the exception of one person, all of those instructors did have a state issued teaching certificate. Five instructors had state issued teaching certificates but were working at sites where this was not required for employment. All seventeen instructors from this group worked for a state-funded ABLE Program, and eight of those programs were housed within school districts. Only one participant from the Focus Group indicated that he or she was currently teaching in an assignment where a state issued certificate was required, however three instructors indicated that they held state issued teaching certificates. Three of the eight instructors in the Focus Group worked for a state-funded ABLE Program. Two of those are placed in

employment assignments within a school district, and one is located within a local community college. One instructor worked within a school district that was once an ABLE site but is not any longer.

To provide additional information about instructors' current teaching contexts, instructors were asked to share the levels of students in the classes that they instruct. The levels represent a continuum of classifying students based on grade equivalent scores from standardized tests in reading and mathematics. The first classification level is Adult Basic Education (ABE), which includes students whose skill in reading and mathematics is the same as, or lower than that of a student completing the ninth month of their third grade year of school. The second classification level, Pre-GED, includes students whose skill levels are between those of a beginning fourth grade student, and a student completing the ninth month of their eighth grade year. The last classification level, Adult Secondary (ASE) / GED includes students whose abilities most closely reflect those of students between the beginning of their ninth, and the end of the twelfth grade years. Most instructors in the Survey Only group indicated that they teach students at all three levels. Survey Only instructors' teaching assignments are graphed in Figure 2.

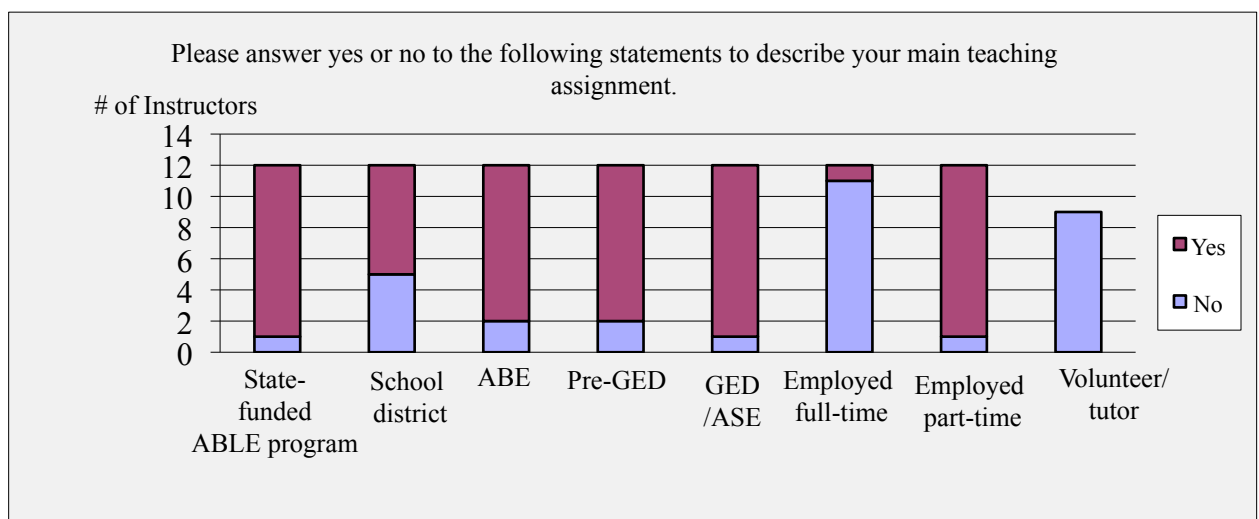


Figure 2. Survey Only Instructors' Assignments.

The current teaching assignments of instructors in the Focus Group are illustrated in Figure 3.

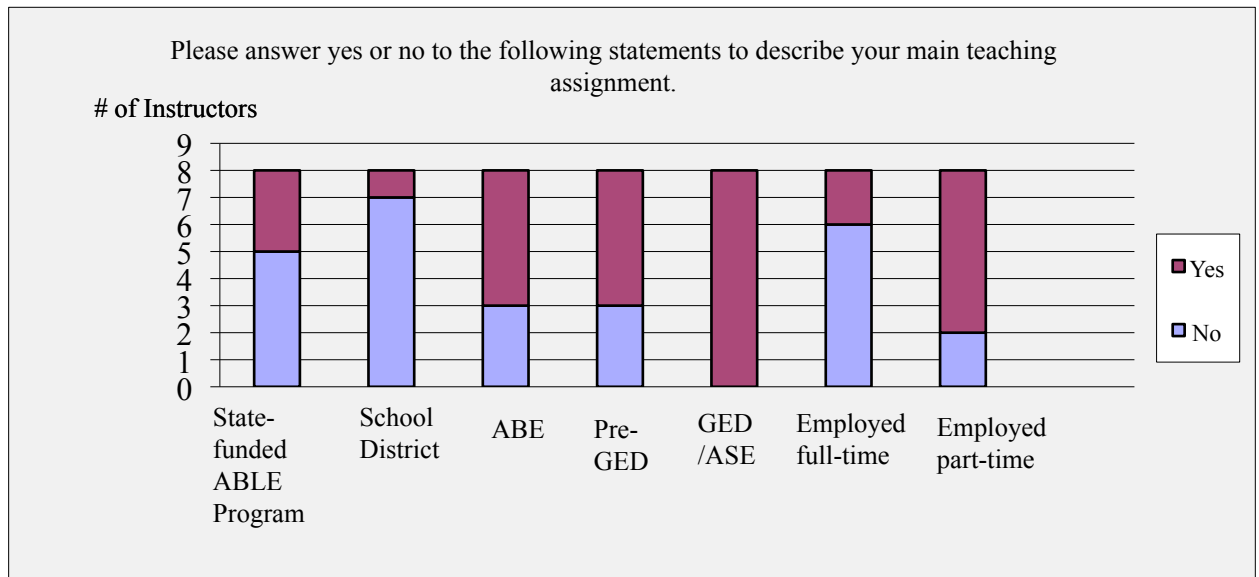


Figure 3. Focus Group Instructors' Assignments.

Most instructors from the Survey Only group indicated that they teach students at all three levels whereas most instructors in the Focus Group indicated that they teach students at two or more levels. This means that instructors could potentially have students at twelve different grade levels in one class, and contradicts findings by Mellard & Patterson (2008) that the NRS levels are used for placement in adult education, as was noted in the literature review. Students are tested for both math and reading, and although they may read at one level, their math skills may be at a different level, but in practice, students are placed into the same class for reading, math, writing, science and social studies. Interview participants validated these findings, and also noted that current practices are to put students in the class at a time and location that is convenient and not based on those literacy assessments. Only one participant (Jessica), who teaches the

literacy component in a program for State Tested Nursing Assistant candidates, indicated that there was a minimum skill level for placement within her class. After three years with another agency, this instructor received an opportunity to provide literacy services for a new program, and indicated to program designers that if they wanted to quickly move students through to the STNA program, they should not admit students below a 6th grade level in reading or mathematics. Program designers responded to her suggestion, but this scenario is the exception in the field. A second participant (Kim) indicated that because her site has a GED program and an ABLE program, students who come for GED testing and test below a certain level are only permitted to take ABLE courses, dividing students at a ninth grade level from students who are below a ninth grade level. However, ABLE instructors can still have students at eight different grade levels in their classes. Also, students are placed into a class based on either their reading or mathematics level, depending on the students' priority for getting help with reading or help with mathematics. As a result, a student who tests into the ninth grade for reading, but fourth grade for mathematics, and is more focused on their reading goal could be placed in a GED class, and could therefore be placed at the appropriate level for reading, but be five to eight grade levels below their classmates in mathematics. Other instructors indicated that they had very little control over the level of students placed in their classes. This placement of students who may be at different levels creates a challenge for instructors to design learning plans that are appropriate for students at multiple levels for each class period, particularly when many instructors do not receive paid prep time.

Instructional Practices.

Instructors were asked to describe their current instructional practices. These

practices include instructional strategies used during instruction, materials used during instruction, and the amount of total instructional time devoted to each of the five subject areas that are assessed on the GED test.

Teaching Multiple Content Areas.

One challenge that instructors in the study faced was that if they were teaching students who wanted to pass the GED test, their students needed instruction in all five of the GED content areas. The expectation for teachers then was that they were able to instruct students in all five areas of the test. During the Focus Group, instructors spoke about the demand to cover five content areas. Luke shared:

The realistic thing is that adult educators do have to be more versed in more subjects, and that's just part and parcel of the shtick.... I go around and everybody's working on different things at the same time.... we have tutors that come in and help people out but I have to be able to answer questions for all of them because sometimes the tutors will say, "Hey I am not sure about this answer."

(Luke, May, 2012)

Survey Only group members and participants from the Focus Group responded to survey questions asking instructors to indicate the number of hours that they teach, and the number of hours they spend in each content area. Out of seventeen participants in the Survey Only group, only four instructors indicated that they devote time to all five subjects. This means that over seventy-five percent of the instructors then are not devoting time to at least one subject that students will face on the GED test. Two instructors indicated that they only teach reading and writing; while one of those

instructors only teaches ABE students (the lowest level learners) the other teachers Pre-GED and GED/ASE students who are in the highest literacy levels, and are most likely enrolled in the program because they have the goal of earning the GED credential.

Instructors in general spend the majority of time teaching math, reading, and writing. A summary of Survey Only instructors' total hours of instruction per week, and the percentage of time instructors indicated they spend each week on instruction in each of the five content areas covered on the GED are provided in Table 8.

Table 8

Survey Only Instructors' Percent of Time in Content Areas.

Total hours taught	Math	Reading	Science	Social Studies	Writing
4	-	100%	-	-	100%
6	-	50%	-	-	50%
6	-	16.5%	16.5%	-	67%
6	33.33%	33.33%	-	-	33.33%
6	33.33%	33.33%	With reading	With reading	33.33%
8	-	100%	-	-	25%
9	67%	11%	-	11%	11%
12	8%	42%	4%	4%	4%
15	30%	13%	13%	13%	30%
20	25%	25%	25%	25%	25%
20	-	50%	-	-	50%
28	50%	14%	-	-	36%
46	26%	26%	9%	13%	26%

Note: In some cases total percentage of time spent in content areas does not equal 100%, possibly due to instructors' confusion with the directions provided.

Six out of eight instructors from the Focus Group indicated that they devote time to all five subjects. One instructor indicated that he or she only teaches mathematics. Overall instructors spend twice as many hours teaching mathematics as they do teaching reading and writing, and nearly six times as much time on mathematics as on science and social studies. One instructor commented, "If they do well in reading, then they'll do well in science and social studies." A summary of Focus Group instructors' total hours of instruction per week, and the percentage of time instructors indicated they spend each week on instruction in each of the five content areas covered on the GED are provided in Table 9.

Table 9

Focus Group Instructors' Time in Content Areas

<i>Total instructional hours per week</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Reading</i>	<i>Social studies</i>	<i>Science</i>	<i>Writing</i>
20	25%	-	-	-	-
18	33%	28%	5.5%	5.5%	28%
20	75%	5%	2.5%	2.5%	15%
12	33%	8%	8%	8%	8%
28	14%	11%	7%	7%	7%
23	43%	13.33%	13.33%	13.33%	17%
32	6%	6%	1.5%	1.5%	3%
18	56%	33%	-	5.5%	5.5%

Note: In some cases total percentage of time spent in content areas does not equal 100%, possibly due to instructors' confusion with the directions provided.

In higher education, professors are assigned to their area of expertise. In the K-12

system, at the middle and high school levels, instructors are responsible for only one content area. Their preparatory coursework requires a concentration in the content area that they plan to teach. As noted in the literature review, Darling-Hammond and Youngs (2002) found that research has demonstrated the importance of content area knowledge, and that students who have high school mathematics and science teachers who have a major in the subjects they teach experience greater academic gains than students taught by out-of-field teachers who do not have similar content area preparation, and that education coursework adds to the influence of subject matter knowledge. This finding underscores the importance of content area knowledge in adult literacy where instructors may be required to teach five content areas: mathematics, science, social studies, reading, and writing.

Instructors in the study spoke of the need to have content knowledge, and expressed that they do not enter the field with this content knowledge. They shared their reluctance to want students to know that they were sometimes at a loss, and described ways that they coped when they didn't have the answers. Jessica wrote, "I didn't want students to know I didn't know. I would sit down with them and say, 'Let's just go through each step together.'" Instructors shared that they believed that students would respect them more, and trust them more if the students felt they were knowledgeable. Instructors felt that lacking content knowledge threatened their credibility as instructors. Luke stated,

If I was a student in one of these classes, if I'm working with somebody, and this person clearly knows how to do the one example in the book but can't give me another problem or something, why the heck am I going to trust that guy?

(Luke, May, 2012)

While those comments indicated the impact of having to teach five different content areas without prior preparation on instructors, there is an even larger, although seldom discussed impact on the students. Instructors were asked to provide the total number of hours that they teach each week, and then to share the number of hours they devote to teaching each of the five content areas each week. Only four out of seventeen instructors from the Survey Only group indicated that they teach all five subjects, with two of the seventeen instructors indicating that they only teach reading and writing. Six out of eight instructors in the Focus Group indicated that they devote time to all five subjects, however, these instructors shared that they spend twice as many hours teaching mathematics as they do teaching reading and writing, and nearly six times as much time on mathematics as on science and social studies. The result then is that students are receiving less preparation for some subjects than for others, and that this imbalance is based not on student needs, but on limits imposed by the instructors' comfort with the content.

The GED test is comprised of reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies (GED Test Service, 2012). The GED Test service requires students to pass tests in all five of the subject areas before they can be awarded a GED credential. Students must have a combined score of 2250 and score 410 or higher in each content area to pass the GED test. (GED Test Service, 2012). This means students have to have an understanding of all five of the subject areas to pass the exam, and cannot rely on strength in one or two subject areas. Although all but one of the instructors in the Survey Only group indicated that they teach GED prep, and all of the instructors in the Focus

Group indicated that they teach GED prep, fewer than half of the instructors (two-fifths) teach all five subjects on the test.

Instructional materials used.

One component of instructors' current teaching situation is the materials and tools that they use for instruction. Instructors from the Survey Only group and Focus Group were asked to indicate which instructional materials they typically use during instruction as a part of the online survey. One-sixth of the instructors from the Survey Only group indicated that they used technology [computers, audio-visual media, or programmed instructional materials (i.e. AZTEC or PLATO basic skills software)] as a component of their typical instructional strategy. Overall, textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets were the tools used most by instructors in the Survey Only group, followed by authentic materials that they brought into the classroom and programmed instructional materials. Examples of authentic materials include literature from doctors' offices or banks, sales circulars, nutrition labels, or other materials that students might encounter while going about the tasks of everyday life, that instructors could use to situate learning tasks within the context of students' lives.

Instructors in the Focus Group also use textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, and authentic materials more than any other tool. Participants in this group did indicate a greater integration of technological tools into their instructional practices. Responses from the Survey Group and the Focus Group surveys are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, respectively.

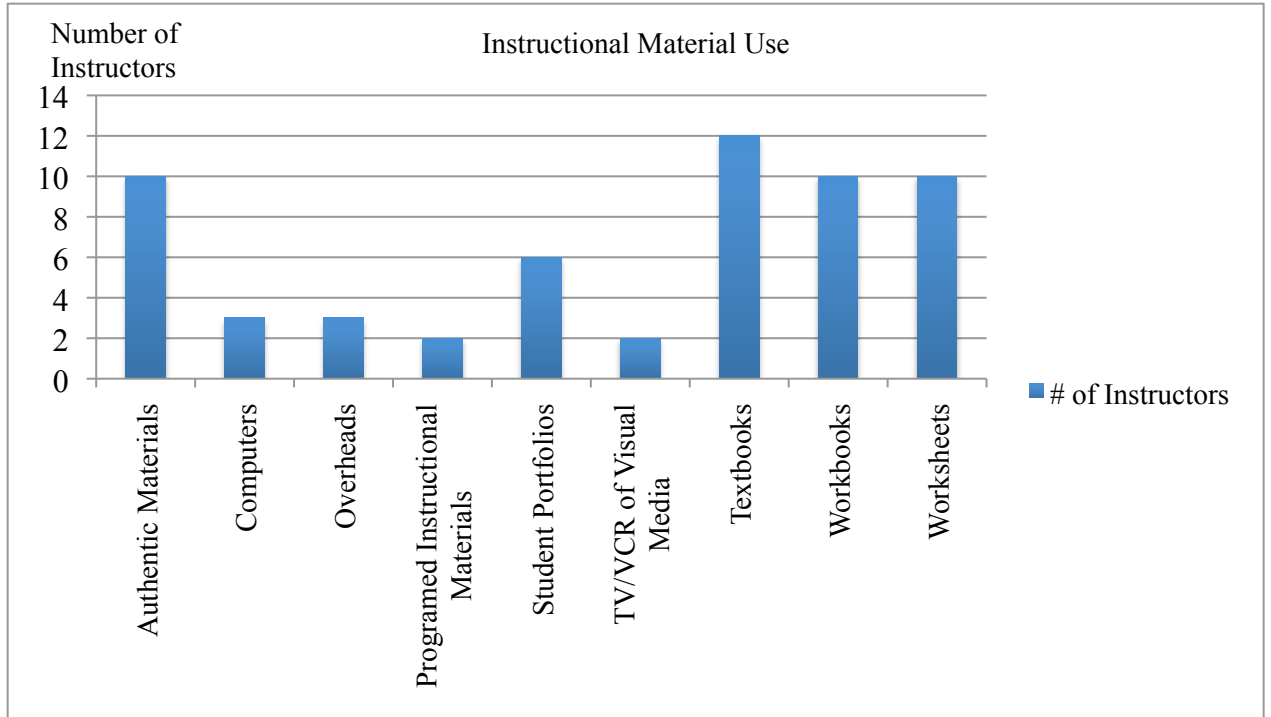


Figure 4. Survey Only group instructional materials use.

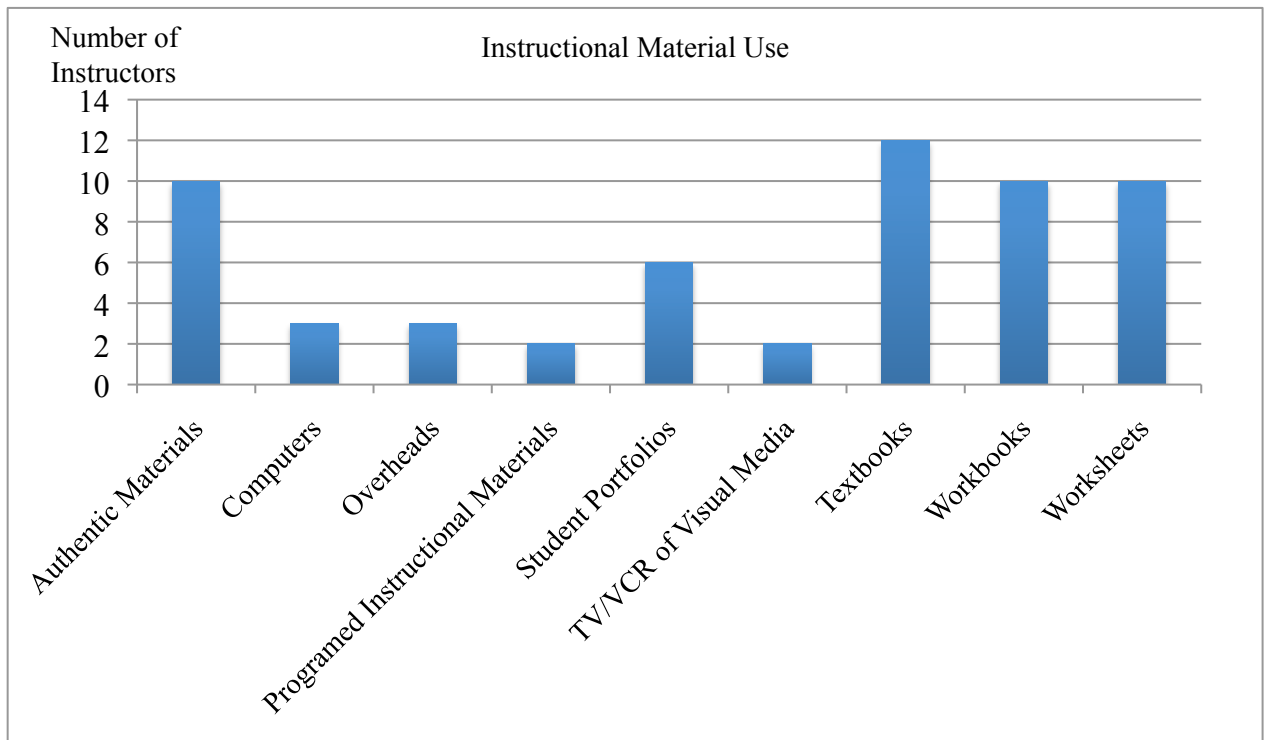


Figure 5. Focus Group instructional materials use.

Instructors indicated that textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, and authentic

materials are the primary materials used for instruction. Instructors indicated that they are sometimes at a loss for which materials are appropriate for different groups of learners (i.e. lower level versus GED Prep). With the exception of authentic materials, these materials do not promote the critical thinking skills that are necessary to pass the GED, or to transition to postsecondary education. Also, these media do not encourage instructors to incorporate the knowledge from the adult learning and development theories in their instructional approaches. Instructors are not encouraged to take advantage of the potential for new knowledge generation that experiential learning opportunities provide, and that the adult learning and development literature indicates is important for adult learning. In addition, these media do not encourage constructivist approaches to instruction, challenge students' worldviews to facilitate transformational learning, promote the development of self-direction in adult literacy learners, or employ the strategies identified in the literature as being effective with adult learners (Baumgartner, 2001; Kolb, 1984; Merriam et al., 2007; Wolf 2005). The lack of material and human resources limits instructional and learning opportunities within the literacy classroom.

Focus group members indicated that the textbooks to which they referred are the GED review books that are used by their program sites. This is consistent with findings from Smith (2003) who reported that many sites use these books as their curriculum. The books are designed to provide a review of, not an introduction to, the five content areas that are covered on the GED test. They are not linked to academic standards or benchmarks, but are designed to provide the best approximation of the skills necessary for passing the GED test. A typical GED book provides a review of material on one page, followed by a page of sample test questions on that material on the following page.

As such, the books do not cover topics in great depth. They are designed to review key concepts. The lessons review rules, procedures, and mathematical algorithms, but do not provide in depth explanations of the underlying concepts. They are student review manuals, not teachers' manuals, and as such, the same resource that GED instructors use as the main tool of their craft are used by students learning on their own in the library. They are not instructional materials. Similarly, the workbooks are smaller versions of these, with the exception being that students often have their own copies and are permitted to write in them. The worksheets are often photocopies of the GED review books.

During the interviews, I had an opportunity to observe several of the program sites while I waited for instructors to finish working with students. On the shelves at each site were rows of textbooks and workbooks. What I did not see were the authentic materials that instructors indicated that they used. The materials were not on the shelves, or on the tables, and where I was able to observe interactions between instructors with students, I only saw students working on computers with teachers or tutors nearby, or teachers working with students on worksheets. Karen, Jessica, John, Rose, Luke, and Susan all showed samples of student folders with samples of student work. Each folder, at five different sites, contained completed worksheets, and some method to track student progress through their worksheet series, but none of the folders contained samples of authentic materials used during instruction. I cannot conclude from those observations that instructors do not use authentic materials, but the observations do suggest that authentic materials may not be used as frequently as textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets, or as frequently as instructors suggest that they use those tools for

instruction, possibly because the resources are not provided at their sites.

Frustration with feeling unprepared.

Instructors talked at length about frustration with feeling unprepared in the classroom as they learned the ropes of teaching literacy content to a diverse group of learners. This frustration dealt with not knowing what to expect, not knowing content, or even not speaking the same language as their students. During her interview, Jessica said, “I felt totally unprepared as a new teacher. I had no idea what I was doing. I definitely learned the content through studying and through the students (Jessica, June, 2012).” During the focus group activity when instructors were discussing feeling unprepared due to lack of comfort with the content, Alice presented an additional problem that she has observed working with instructors who did have a considerable grasp of the content, but lacked the skills to transmit that content knowledge in a way that students could grasp it.

Some instructors did indicate that there were subject areas that they felt very comfortable with and very confident teaching, but that once they were required to tackle additional content areas in which they were not so well-versed, they felt unprepared. During Kim’s interview she described how this was the case with her very first teaching experience. Her feelings of being unprepared were exacerbated by being assigned to teach students who were not even speaking the same language as she spoke. She recalled:

I went from doing math and science where I was confident to teaching everything without any guidance. How do I teach them to write English when they don’t even speak it? I got the GED book and they she said, “here, you’re teaching this.”

I was teaching for El _____ and my students couldn't even speak English. It was the biggest waste of time and I felt so bad because they got nothing out of it. I had no idea of where to start with those students at all. One student interpreted. That was terrible.

(Kim, June, 2012)

During the focus group activity Richard described his frustration with students who come to him for help with content with which he is unfamiliar. He described the work that he puts into trying to improving his content knowledge to avoid those experiences. He remarked:

A lot of times I am tutoring and I don't know what they want, and they'll say here, I don't get this in the book, and you're like "physics? Okay let me look at it," and you're looking like, an ass. So, maybe we are not prepared. I've been studying for three years just to try and stay ahead.

(Richard, May, 2012)

Instructors differed on their opinions on how much preparation was enough preparation, how much instructors need to know, if students should know when instructors do not know something, and how to cope when encountering material or problems with which they are unfamiliar. The majority of the instructors (all but two) felt that instructors should be knowledgeable about the subjects. They believed that instructors should invest the time to become familiar enough with the content to be able to explain it well enough for students to understand. Luke spoke about his own experiences as a student and how it impacted his view of teachers if their understanding of content was limited to the one or two examples in the book. To him, this demonstrated

a lack of expertise that made him view instructors in a different light.

Instructors felt it threatened their credibility with students if instructors appeared to not know the material. Jessica explained that the majority of her students are older than she is. She felt that older students might already doubt her skill, knowledge, and ability due to her age. For her, knowing the material is a critical component of maintaining students' trust. She shared, "I didn't want students to know I didn't know. I would sit down with them and say, 'Let's just go through each step together.'"

Karen and Monica, both older instructors, felt the opposite was true. They believed that it was helpful to students to know that teachers do not have all of the answers, and that finding the answers to questions together, or seeking help from another instructor was not only acceptable, but could become a "teachable moment."

Then they learn that they don't have to know everything and that we're all learning. If you think these students are empty vessels and I have to put all of the information in there, then you're in the wrong profession.

(Brenda, May, 2012)

Karen believed that pretending to know everything was dishonest, and felt that it was perfectly acceptable to tell a student, "I cannot get my head around this problem but I will have the answer for you tomorrow."

Instructor Ingenuity.

Instructors learned a lot through their practice of adult literacy instruction, including the learning how to adapt instruction, or interact differently with different students, and the learning of content necessary to prepare students for the GED test. Instructors spoke of instances where they used teaching experiences to learn content.

Instructors also talked about studying the content to be able to keep up with what the students would need to learn. Margaret shared,

I was always comfortable with language arts and social studies. Math and science were the least comfortable but I have honed my math skills having to teach the GED. I have gotten better at math from teaching math. We can kind of figure out math and language.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

Instructors spent time figuring things out in their early years of instruction. Those lessons learned may be covered in professional development opportunities, but with current professional development requirements, instructors were able to learn some of those the lessons themselves before they ever attended professional development. During the focus group activity, Debra commented, “I attended a conference session about how short attention spans are and about how to keep students’ attention in the classroom, you know, **things we have already figured out (emphasis added)** (Debra, May, 2012).

Instructors improved instructional strategies through experience over time. The following dialogue between Richard and Liz demonstrated that this process took several years.

Richard: I guess it’s obvious after a while you come to understand what does work and what does engage a student and what actually will hold a student’s interest. That’s what we bring to our classroom but we didn’t know that the first three or four or five or whatever years. We walked in there not knowing how to relate to an adult, how to be an adult educator but we learned it.

Liz: But it’s difficult.

Richard: But if we were trained to do that, then sure.

(Liz and Richard May, 2012)

Instructors drew from their general education when executing lessons. Instructors found that when they had a firm foundation in the content areas, they were able to draw from that to supplement approaches in the GED books.

You have had a great education and I have too, and I know that has helped me a lot just knowing how to do some problems, even though the book may tell you to do it one way. Just being able to have an alternative.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Instructors also drew from past life experiences, finding that experience was often more helpful than formal training. Monica, a trained K-12 educator felt that the practice of using skills that she learned in pursuit of her bachelor's in education was more useful than the education itself. She stated:

I think my background helps me just in terms of being able to plan and execute methods, but, I don't think my formal education did that, I think the practical application of having had to do that has helped me be able to do that. It came from being a teacher and professional development things.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Instructors took advantage of opportunities to network. Interacting with other instructors provided instructors who often taught in isolation with an opportunity to meet others whose experiences were similar to their own. Instructors learned from this interaction, sharing strategies, resources, and lessons learned in the field. Monica shared:

I've learned so much from T____...I didn't know what to expect when I came in. She just, I followed her lead and that is how she ran her classroom and I was like,

“Wow, this is awesome, this makes so much sense.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Instructors brought resources from a variety of personal experiences into the adult literacy classroom. Past experiences provided instructors with interpersonal communication approaches that they found helpful when working with students. Experiences of being students provided instructors with insight about how to help students develop as learners. Instructors also spoke about how their experiences with creative teachers in their past learning experiences added to their creativity when delivering instruction.

My experiences as a mother are used plenty. My experiences in pastoral ministry help me to be compassionate. (Liz, May, 2012)

My experiences as a student help my students to become good students, and helps them to develop a learning attitude for life. (Karen, May, 2012)

Debra shared that past teachers who really made an impression on her provide her idea with creative teaching approaches, or creating memorable learning experiences with students to keep them engaged. She shared:

I know some things that really helped me, I tend to do the same things with my students that my teachers did for me, like with balancing in algebra. I had a teacher in junior high and he would say, “Subtract from one side, what do you have to do, what do you have to do?” and he was so funny that you were looking at him get ready to fall and we had to hurry up and say subtract from the other side to balance him out so I tend to do silly things in front of the class because it helps them remember things instead of just talking to them in the same voice and

putting stuff on the board and blah- blah-blah! I find that my students do better when I discuss social studies and science.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Richard spoke about drawing upon his military training, and the hands-on nature of his experience teaching automotive technology to find instructional approaches that engage students. While describing one example, he stated, “I always get them to get up and use the area and perimeter in the rooms, wherever they want to go, outside, except in the winter. They get into it if you get them motivated (Richard, May, 2012).”

Instructors found that in addition to content and pedagogical knowledge, developing the right combination of personality traits was also useful in adult literacy. Instructors also spoke about the importance of commitment to the students to student success.

You have to be patient, flexible, and friendly. I think they have to have a balance between their desire to instruct adults and their ability to be able to instruct adults. Teachers who aren’t motivated and some of them are just doing it for a paycheck, they aren’t committed to the students and you are but other teachers don’t share that same philosophy.

(Joyce, May, 2012)

Students

Instructors spoke about the empathy and respect that they have for their students. During her interview Rose stated, “I have total respect for our students. They work so hard. It is a privilege to work with them (Rose).” They acknowledged that many adult learners return to the classroom after a history of being unsuccessful in an educational

setting. They spoke of the courage that it must have taken for students to go back into the classroom, particularly given that they may have had feelings of shame about not completing school and obtaining a high school diploma the first time around. Instructors admired students' willingness to face that shame and go back to school. Liz stated:

At least I mean to get some kind of communication going and make them feel comfortable because I think it's a kind of big step to walk in there as an adult and say, "You know, I need this." I wouldn't want to do it.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Instructors' indicated that they have high expectations of students. Their expectations for students influence how they view themselves as teachers, and what they expect of themselves as instructors.

As teachers, we need to be there and be prepared. I'm here every day and I am prepared and if I wasn't you'd report me, so I have the same expectation for students that they expect of me. I think "expectations" is a buzzword for commitment.

(Edward, May, 2012)

You have to have high expectations for students and demonstrate professionalism. Students need to see their teacher as the expert or their coach that is encouraging them, if not both.

(Luke, May, 2012)

Instructors were undecided about whether their approach with students should be accepting students for who they were, and for where they were, or pushing them to achieve. Some instructors approached the classroom with the attitude that it was

incumbent upon them to adapt to the students. Others felt that it was up to the instructor to set the tone in the classroom. Instructors in the latter group expected students to adapt to their expectations.

And it's our responsibility to set those expectations. I am somewhat of a disciplinarian in the classroom to maintain order, and to maintain those expectations. The fact of coming through many years of higher education there is a certain level of expectation that may be different. I may be more rigid than you. Because of where I have come from and what I have been through. Education is not just to get a job. It enhances the quality of life. The choices that they make, critical thinking, thinking outside the box, these are the expectations that their education should bring to them.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Instructors shared their views/cultural beliefs about students. It was interesting to listen to the instructors discuss the students as I transcribed the focus group activity. I bristled at many of the comments, finding them to be a bit negative, and had to go back to listen to the beginning of the session to be certain that I mentioned that the sessions would be recorded for the purposes of transcription. The cameras were placed between each pair of instructors, and were hard to miss, but I wondered as I listened if they had forgotten that the cameras were there. I felt that their views of students did not necessarily represent my views of students that I have taught. As I reviewed the transcripts I realized that three instructors (Edward, Liz, and Richard) were responsible for the majority of the comments that made me slightly uncomfortable. As I read through the transcripts again I got the feeling that Richard was responding more to Liz's

comments than initiating negative comments, and that he sort of straddled the fence between viewing the students in a positive and negative light. I struggled with how to represent those cultural views in the study, or whether they should be included at all. Could this be considered the “essence” of the experience since it seemed to stem from these three instructors? In the spirit of reflexivity, I decided to let the instructors themselves decide if it should be a part of their narrative. I transcribed the comments and included them in the theme category “views/cultural beliefs about students.” I provided copies of the transcripts, and asked participants to read through the theme categories, and the comments from focus group members that supported the identification of that category. My expectation was that instructors would view those sections and contend that I misunderstood them, or offer explanations for the comments that I found negative. Five out of eight Focus Group members responded after reviewing the documents, and none of the five disagreed with anything that they saw. Richard wrote, “I thought the attached notes were excellent. It really shows the need for getting the adult education system fixed (Richard, May, 2012).”

In addition, during the interviews, after participants answered the interview questions, we went through the themes together one by one, and reviewed the statements that came out of the focus group activity. Instructors were asked to tell whether or not those themes represented their experiences, and to provide any additional comments, anecdotes, or thoughts. Again, I expected instructors to disagree with that section. Only two instructors (Kim and Monica) indicated that they did not view their students in this way. Monica wrote,

After reading the responses in your document, I think instructors need to know

what a learning disability is, and is not, as well as the educational and legal history of disabilities. Hopefully, this preparation would help them to see their students in a different light.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Kim also indicated that her experience with the students has been positive. She shared an experience of not realizing how important the GED was when her niece obtained her GED. I wondered if the experience of having someone in her family who has been through what our students are going through has influenced her view of the students, and prevents her from viewing students through the lens of “otherness” in the way that other instructors seemed to. I didn’t feel study data provided enough information to draw any conclusions about that, nevertheless, study data, through the initial discussion and through the member validation indicated that these cultural views about students were a part of the “essence of the experience” of teaching in adult literacy. One example is the dialogue that took place with Liz and Richard as the pair discussed the research questions, as written below:

Liz: I find that students don’t keep up on their current events. It’s almost like they can’t take responsibility, like they’re still in that mode of being told what they have to have, rather than as an adult saying “Here’s what I need.” Well, I’ve even said to them they’ll say, “Oh, I don’t like to read.” And I’ll say just, “Read the newspaper. Read an article in a magazine, just anything.” People don’t know how to set a goal and how am I gonna get there you know. I say, “What are you gonna do to achieve this goal and what’s got to be in place there when the kids are sick. What if you don’t have transportation or when your car breaks down?” It’s

those kinds of things that they don't really think about.

Richard: I tell people I will make you a student. You don't know how to be a student. When you are willing to learn, there is some, I mean, it's kind of the teacher and the student, that you have to submit I think to be a student. You have to want to be a student. Some students don't know how. So, I kind of bring that.

Liz: It's like having an adult body with a child's mentality.

Richard: If you're lucky, some are cracked out or drugged out.

Liz: I had one yesterday. He couldn't even answer me. I was like, "Are you okay?" Richard: Yeah which student are you today?

Liz: He must have smoked some marijuana or something before he walked in the door cause

Richard: Yeah that happens

Liz: I was like you're out in the Ozone or something

Richard: That's the hard part. You never know what you get.

(Liz and Richard, May, 2012)

One aspect of the instructors' comments that was interesting to me was the number of assumptions that instructors made about students as a group. Assumptions were made about their parents and the values that they did or did not instill, assumptions were made about students' home lives, assumptions were made about their values, and about their reading habits. Their earlier conversation talked about the barriers that students face and how instructors wanted to be equipped to help students navigate those barriers. In those conversations, students and instructors were on the same team, working toward the same goal. Then the conversation veered toward the barriers that the students

themselves create, or that their parents have created for them, and the instructors went from wanting to help students remove barriers to wanting students to pretend that those barriers do not exist while they access literacy services. This conversation demonstrated “othering” of the GED students, and created more distance between the instructors and students.

Edward: To me education is a value system that's instilled if your parents value education, how do we help them see that this is something that is valuable to them, to their future. And I don't know how to instill that, it's part of what instilling hope I think...

First of all, our population, they have to be taught to learn before they can even begin to learn. And they didn't get that structure in CMSD, or in public education. And they run into a lot of teachers that didn't care.

Richard: Or a bad home life.

Edward: We don't even want to open that can of worms because it's the major brunt of the problem...their domestic lifestyle.

Luke: It really is amazing. Every night before I went to bed, we read fifteen, twenty minutes. Most of my students never had that.

(Richard, Edward, and Luke, May, 2012)

Liz made several comments that displayed how she saw the students. What was troubling to me, aside from her comfort at saying these things publicly, was that she generalized characteristics to her entire group of students, using only the characteristics that confirm the negative stereotypes. This is particularly troubling to me since she is an older Caucasian female, working on Cleveland's east side, at a program that serves a

young, African American population. I wondered if and how those negative cultural beliefs might impact her instruction. She told of another student who had been working as a pharmacy tech for 23 years or so who came back for her GED, yet her characterization of her students didn't reflect those students who don't fit that mold. What was also disturbing to me was that she prides on herself on being a pastoral minister and views herself as compassionate, demonstrating to me that she did not recognize the biases and cultural beliefs that she had of her students. She said, "I try to be compassionate, even though I got told I was unprofessional." She then recounted a story where she was called unprofessional by a student because the student overheard her telling a tutor a story about another student in which she called the student a derogatory name. She then stated, "I try to treat them with dignity and to not be downgrading anyone. I hope I come across that way." Additional comments from Liz are:

If they clock in at 6:10 I know exactly how many minutes they've been there when they clock back out. Which is really gonna throw those guys that are under the gun with the p.o. it's gonna throw them for a loop because they really like to push the envelope.

Yeah so I said you better wake up and smell the roses or else you are NOT gonna be getting a job anywhere if you don't get that GED. I mean you already got all these strikes against you with all the felonies and.... they're not going far in this world.

(Liz, May, 2012)

I find with the essays they really don't wanna think you know. Most of the adults you have are probably in their mindset still as a teenager. Well you know a lot of

them, I hate to say it, they quit school, they've laid on the couch, played every friggin video game that ever came out, and just kind of sat there and said, gee, maybe I ought to get a GED I'll ask them what do you do for relaxation, and one guy wrote drugs, one guy wrote smoke weed.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Edward and Luke had a conversation between themselves that expressed various levels of frustration with student conduct. Edward described how he sets expectations and establishes ground rules so students leave their personal lives at home, and lamented that they then leave literacy lessons inside of the classroom. They discussed the forces that they saw as competing with what they as instructors are trying to help students accomplish.

Edward: I want to say something about ...I think you really have to separate yourself from the personal aspect of the student and it has to be....all of those barriers, all of those personal domestic barriers they bring into the classroom, you have to explain to them to leave that outside of the classroom. These two hours, these three hours belong to you. Cell phones off. I provide a model of structure, a model of organization, or high expectation. When you come in this room, this is what is expected of you. If it must start with cell phones off, gentleman hats off, basically we want to leave those worldly issues on the outside of this room, at least for two hours. The problem is, you don't take these values with you. You don't take these educational values with you. When you leave the classroom you're using the same horrible grammar, with your conjugated verbs and the whole bit. Why? Because of peer pressure. That's a whole other issue they're

faced with. That's another one of those lectures or tirades in the classroom. Don't turn on the TV. Go to the library and find a book that you like, that you enjoy reading. But again, that's another deterrent in their lives. You are just drumming up a lot of frustrations that we teachers are faced with. That's what we compete against. We compete against the television. We compete against cell phones, and the endless, mindless hours on the phone. We compete against peer pressure. What looks cool, you know carrying a book bag in our neighborhoods, it isn't cool, but standing on the corner selling drugs you know you're a national hero. Coming back from five years of incarceration you're a national hero. Their value system is shot and that is what we fight against. Why do I need an education? Why do I need this? That's what we're up against.

Luke: You gotta have people saying to their friends...I as a teacher can say until I'm blue in the face that this is important, but unless somebody actually says it to their friends, you know...

Edward: I wonder if they hear it at home. I wonder if parents see schools more as an education assistance than a babysitter, or somewhere you can go for eight hours a day, or something to raise hell about when the school system says, well, we're going to take an hour away, or two hours away. Well that jeopardizes my job because who is going to watch my kid. It starts at home. That's where the problem starts.

Luke: I find it interesting that the students even though they are adults, a lot of the techniques with dealing with teenagers still cross apply in terms of behavioral issues and keeping people interested but the instructional strategies are all

different so the behavioral stuff and the learning styles and stuff that all cross applies but there's something about, well, this is how many times we have to go over something. This is how many worksheets I have to give you...that doesn't apply at all.

(Edward and Luke, May, 2012)

Edward, Richard, and Liz had a conversation that seemed to center more on the frustration of teaching students than on the students' upbringing, values, or the students themselves. They discussed their frustration with getting students to show effort, particularly in the areas of reading and writing.

Edward: You ask them to read now, it's like you're asking them to eat worms. ...or hang themselves. It's a cuss word. It's unbelievable.

Liz: Read an article in a magazine, just anything

Richard: That is a challenge getting students to read.

Liz: That's what we seem to concentrate a lot on is math

Richard: Everybody does

Liz: and writing

Richard: the two worst

Richard: Because they can't write an essay.

Liz: I tell them to read so they can expand their experiences of the

Richard: They don't wanna read.. don't want to write. At times it makes you want to just yell at them, and I do.

Summary of findings for Research Question 1

The overall essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator was that since instructors entered the field without initially having adult literacy instruction as a career goal, and since there were no formal processes in place for providing preparation for adult literacy education, none of the instructors had formal training in teaching the adult literacy content to adult literacy learners before they were hired to do the work. They found themselves in teaching situations where they lacked the content and pedagogical knowledge, and often the human and material resources, needed to perform their jobs. They rallied whatever resources they had, be it prior education, life experiences, or fellow colleagues in the field, to fill in gaps in knowledge and skill, along the way. Although instructors enjoyed the experience, and have developed a passion for the work, they found the experience to be full of challenges, and often frustration. Liz's description of her experiences tells the story best:

I've already said Baptism by fire. I came in from AmeriCorps with no background in adult literacy at all. I had to learn how to do all the stuff. I came in totally unprepared. I mean I have a degree but my degree is in theology. Thank God I had two good mentors that worked in education....I had to learn a whole new jargon about education.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Research Question 2: What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?

Contribution of Past Formal Education.

In the literature it was noted that Smith (2010) wrote that teacher quality and effectiveness are influenced by instructors' backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications.

Instructors were asked to describe how past formal educational experiences have contributed to the knowledge and skills that they use for instruction. Specifically, how does formal education aid in selecting curricula, materials, and instructional strategies. Participant responses along with sample statements are included in Table 10.

Table 10

Contribution of Past Formal Education

Contribution of formal education	Number of survey group members	Number of focus group instructors	Sample participant statements
Very helpful	3	3	My masters in adult education was very helpful
Helpful	-	3	General knowledge and understanding of academic vocabulary, math concepts, U.S. History.
Somewhat Helpful	-	1	Most of my classes had a (K-12) focus geared toward teaching kids, so I had to modify what I learned (about strategies and materials), so it could apply to my adult students.
Not at all	4	4	None, I my formal educational training was in elementary education

Seven instructors in the Survey Only group answered this question, with three instructors describing past formal education as very helpful, and four finding past formal

education not helpful at all. The Focus Group was similarly divided in their survey responses with four instructors indicating that formal education was very helpful and four indicating that formal education does not help with curricular and instructional decisions at all. During the focus group activity there was a consensus among instructors that past formal education is not necessarily sufficient for content area mastery and instruction. During her interview, Margaret stated, “I don’t think that just because you have a bachelor’s degree you can figure all of this out (Margaret, May, 2012).”

Formal training in adult learning and development.

Instructors who have formal training in adult education indicated that they benefit from their past formal education in this field. Out of 25 participants who responded to the survey in both the Survey Only group and the Focus Group, only three instructors had formal training in adult education, or adult learning and development. The instructors indicated that this formal training helped them to understand group dynamics. In addition, these instructors indicated that they felt they have a better understanding of the psychology of the adult learner, and a better understanding of adult development. Alice commented:

My masters of adult education helped me learn about the psychology of the adult learner and group dynamics. It helped to provide me with teaching methods, my masters in adult education, and dynamics. I definitely benefitted from the teaching methods. The psychology...

(Alice, May, 2012)

Edward indicated that his formal education was probably not necessary for his position specifically, but that the education itself has helped him to access learning from

professional development and in the level of professionalism that he displays. He explained:

I have a Masters degree from Tiffin, MBA, as well as a Masters in Education.

Was it necessary, probably not, but it helps with professional development as you go to different programs. To conceive and understand the different strategies of teaching. I think PD that I do now have more to do with dealing with classroom situations is where I think I am trying to go with that. Now as far as what I have learned in school in my many years of school is a certain structure and a certain professionalism.

(Edward, May, 2012)

In the literature review it was noted that Reder & Strawn (2001) indicated that the research around the learning and professional development theories that instructors found helpful for working with adult literacy students was conducted on adult learners whose needs are different than the students encountered in adult literacy classes. This research was not conducted on adult literacy populations, and was not conducted on adults with learning disabilities; therefore, these learning and development theories may not apply to many of the learners within the adult literacy context, particularly those students with learning disabilities or learning differences. As well, these formal educational experiences in adult learning and development do not equip instructors with content knowledge typically covered in adult literacy classes, or with the technical skills to help students master that content. Edward, who does have a Master's in Adult Learning commented, "I have come to understand that I am not a great technical teacher but my students recognize the passion and love that Christ has for them through me (Edward,

May, 2012).” While passion is admirable, and arguably important, it is not a substitute for content knowledge and pedagogical skills. Instructors in the study also came to the conclusion that past formal education is not necessarily sufficient for content area mastery and instruction.

During the focus group discussion about the misperceptions people have about the level of difficulty of the GED test, or the level of preparation necessary to prepare for the test, Luke stated:

Very few people can roll out of bed and take this test, there’s almost nobody that can. It’s like running a marathon, you gotta get yourself ready you gotta get yourself prepared. If you’re not doing that constant preparation you are not going to be ready.

(Luke, May, 2012)

While this comment was made in reference to students needing to prepare, it also alludes to the difficulty of the content on the GED test, and therefore within GED classes. The information is not common knowledge that any adult would know, although the current hiring and professional development policies would suggest so.

Formal education in K-12 teaching methods.

Study participants with experience in the K-12 setting indicated that learning about teaching methods as part of their formal education was helpful in preparing them for instruction within adult literacy. Monica, indicated that while she was trained in education, she did not feel her training was what prepared her for tasks such as designing lessons, creating lesson plans, and selecting instructional materials. She believed that her skills in those areas came from having had to complete those tasks as an adult literacy

educator. In essence, her experiences, and the practice of completing those tasks have taught her the ropes more than any formal education has. Ten instructors from the Survey Only group indicated that K-12 certification is required at their sites. Eight of these sites are housed within school districts. Only one participant from the Focus Group indicated that he or she is currently teaching in an assignment where a state issued certificate is required, however three instructors indicated that they hold state issued teaching certificates. Overall eighteen instructors from the Survey Only group and Focus Group indicated that they hold K-12 teaching certificates awarded by the State of Ohio. One instructor indicated that training as a K-12 teacher was insufficient when working with adult learners. This is in accordance with findings presented in the literature that the K-12 credential is not adequate for teaching adult literacy students (Smith & Gomez, 2011). This would indicate that the preparation that instructors in the sample received was not adequate preparation for teaching adult literacy students.

Preparation for instruction.

Instructors were asked to rate their preparation for various tasks and competencies related to adult literacy instruction. Instructors in the Survey Only group indicated that they felt most prepared to use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading, followed by using adult learning and development theories to inform instructional strategies. Instructors felt least prepared with integrating technology into the classroom, selecting varied instructional approaches for teaching mathematics, and integrating strategies to help prepare learners for work or careers. Interestingly, the Focus Group was just the opposite with instructors in the Focus Group indicating that they felt most prepared to use varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics. Focus Group

instructors felt only somewhat prepared to use varied instructional strategies to teach reading. The extent to which Survey Only instructors feel prepared to implement other instructional practices are displayed in Table 11 below.

Table 11

Survey Only Instructor Perception of Preparation

Answer options	Not prepared	Somewhat prepared	Prepared	Very prepared	Rating avg.
Implement strategies based on theories of adult learning and development	0	1	6	2	3.11
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading effectively	0	2	4	4	3.20
Explore classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style	0	4	3	2	2.78
Help learners meet their learning goals for work, family, and self	0	2	7	0	2.78
Accommodate widely varied ability levels within the same classroom	0	3	5	1	2.78
Use strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with	0	4	4	1	2.67

learning differences					
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	1	3	4	1	2.56
Use varied instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	0	5	3	1	2.56
Integrating Technology into the classroom	0	8	1	0	2.11

The extent to which the instructors in the Focus Group feel prepared to implement other instructional practices are summarized in Table 12 below.

Table 12

Focus Group Instructor Perception of Preparation

Answer Options	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Very Prepared	Rating Average
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	1	1	6	2	2.90
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading effectively	1	5	2	2	2.50
Use instructional strategies for teaching in content areas	1	3	4	2	2.70
Accommodate widely varied ability levels within the same classroom	2	4	2	2	2.40
Implement effective lesson, curriculum planning	2	4	3	1	2.30
Help learners meet their learning	1	6	2	1	2.30

goals for work, family, and self					
Integrate technology into the classroom	2	5	0	2	2.22
Explore classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style	1	6	3	0	2.20
Implement strategies based on theories of adult learning and development	4	1	4	1	2.20
Use varied instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	2	6	2	0	2.00
Use strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences	5	2	1	1	1.78

Looking at both groups, there are instructors who feel least prepared to use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading and mathematics. Clearly, while some instructors have gained some knowledge of adult learners from formal education, that is insufficient to prepare instructors for teaching reading and math. As stated in the literature review, Smith (2006) wrote that knowledge of adult learner characteristics and classroom management skills alone are not likely sufficient to teach reading and related literacy skills to adult nonreaders, and that even for instructors who have certification in elementary education few are likely to have had specific coursework in reading instruction. Comparisons of the two groups' perceptions of preparation are presented in Table 13 below.

Table 13

Comparison of Instructor Perception of Preparation

Answer options	Survey only rating average	Focus group rating average
Implement strategies based on theories of adult learning and development	3.11	2.20
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading effectively	3.20	2.50
Explore classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style	2.78	2.20
Help learners meet their learning goals for work, family, and self	2.78	2.30
Accommodate widely varied ability levels within the same classroom	2.78	2.40
Use strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences	2.67	1.78
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	2.56	2.90
Use varied instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	2.56	2.00
Integrating Technology into the classroom	2.11	2.22

Placing the instructor perceptions side by side yields an interesting observation. Instructors in the Survey Only group have a higher perception of preparation for all but two categories; using varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively,

and integrating technology into the classroom. Recall that 66% of the Survey Only Group has been teaching over ten years, and 62.5% of the Focus Group members have been teaching for six years or more. From these data it would appear that instructors' perception of preparation improves with time. Instructors did indicate that it takes several years to learn the ropes; perhaps after five or six years instructors do feel more prepared for instruction.

Basic skills test.

The Focus Group participants completed the computer adaptive version of the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), developed by CTB McGraw Hill. The TABE test is the official assessment tool accepted as a measure of student progress for WIA funded ABLE programs and is used widely by adult literacy programs as a predictor of readiness for the GED test. The computer adaptive TABE is an online version of the accepted standard basic skills test used for students in ABLE programs. The rationale for administering the TABE to instructors was to provide some measure of how well instructors have mastered the mathematics and language arts content that they are responsible for helping students master in adult literacy classes, and to use that information to facilitate a conversation among instructors about professional development needs. Test scores addressed research questions two and three, providing information on how instructors' formal education and training and professional development have contributed to their instructional practice by providing a snapshot of the group's mastery of the basic skills content. The test assessed mathematics and reading competency, and presented findings in the form of standard scores, grade level

equivalents, the range of scale scores and grade equivalents, and National Reporting Standard levels. The researcher and the individual testers were the only people to see the individual scores, although participants used pseudonyms, so the researcher was not aware of which score corresponded with which individual. Group means were shared with the focus group.

Participants had one hour and fifteen minutes to complete three sections of the TABE test. The sections that they were asked to complete were reading, mathematics computation, and applied mathematics; the content areas used for measuring student grade level equivalents and student progress in adult literacy. The reading section covers the category objectives of interpreting graphic information, words in context, recall information, construct meaning, evaluate/extend meaning. The mathematics computation section covers the category objectives of basic operations with whole numbers (add, subtract, multiply, divide), decimals, fractions, integers, percents, order of operations, and algebraic operations. The applied math section covers the category objectives of number and number operations, computation in context, estimation, measurement, geometry and spatial sense, data analysis, statistics and probability, patterns, functions, algebra, and problem solving and reasoning. CTB McGraw Hill sets time limits of fifteen minutes, thirty minutes, and thirty minutes for the math computation, applied math, and reading tests respectively, although instructors were permitted to work at their own paces, within the allotted seventy-five minutes. If the paper and pencil version of the test was administered, instructors would have been stopped when they reached the time limit and incomplete answers would be marked as incorrect. With the demo versions of the online test, however, scores are only provided

for complete tests, and since the priority for the study was to have completed scores, instructors were allowed to continue each test until it was completed. The test sequence presented math computation first, followed by applied math, and then reading.

With the exception of one participant who arrived fifteen minutes late, all of the instructors started the test session at roughly the same time, with two or three participants starting a minute or two after the others due to problems logging into the test. Some instructors were able to complete all three tests during that time, while others were only able to complete one or two, demonstrating a range of ability and fluency with the basic skills content, as well as a range of comfort with testing among the instructors. Mean scores for each test section are provided in Table 14.

Table 14

Focus Group Members' Average TABE Scores and Grade Level Equivalents (GLEs)

	N=	Mean Scale Score	Range	Mean GLE	Range
Math Computation	8	651.5	208	11.6	6.5
Applied Mathematics	5	644.2	186	11.74	2.7
Reading	4	666	104	12.9	0

All eight Focus Group members completed the math computation test. The lowest TABE scale score received by a participant was a 518, which would not be a passing score on the GED test (CTB-McGraw Hill, 2002). The mean score was 651.5, for a grade level of 11.6 (with a highest possible score of 12.9), meaning that, on average, instructors scored similarly to a student completing the sixth month of his or her eleventh grade year. This average TABE scale score correlates to roughly a 450 on the GED

Mathematics test, which is a passing score (CTB-McGraw Hill, 2002). The highest TABE scale score was a 726, for a difference of five grade levels between the lowest and highest scoring instructors.

Five Focus Group members completed the applied mathematics section. The mean score was 644.2, for a grade equivalent of 11.74 (with a highest possible score of 12.9), correlating again to a 450 on the GED math test. The low score was 575, or a GED score of 410, the minimum score required to pass that section of the test. The high score was 761, a difference of two and a half grade levels. This smaller difference in grade levels could reflect that the participants who were able to complete both math sections were stronger in math on average than the group overall, causing the average to raise once instructors who were only able to complete one section were removed from the equation. Four focus group members completed the reading section. The low score for reading was 632, and the high score was 736, both within the highest grade level category possible (12.9), and with both scores being sufficient to pass the GED test. Again, the instructors who were able to reach this section demonstrated a higher comfort level at minimum, and possibly a higher competence level in subjects across the board, resulting in a smaller range between high and low scores.

When this test is administered to students to assess entering literacy levels and to test learner gains it is administered as a timed test. When students reach the time limit they are stopped; incomplete answers are marked as incorrect. Since the CTB McGraw Hill demo account that was provided for this study does not provide scores for incomplete tests, instructors were encouraged to complete what they could. There are no data on how instructors performed on sections that they began but did not complete. It is

possible that instructors who did not access the reading portion of the test may have missed the opportunity to test in their strongest area, so it is difficult to draw conclusions across the content areas.

Some of the instructors' scores, and the inability of some instructors to complete the test within established test time limits, speak to the lack of fluency with math computation and the applied mathematics skills presented on portions of the TABE test. Given that the Focus Group participants have an average of six years' of experience teaching the adult literacy content, and given that they each indicated that they taught mathematics during the past academic year, it is clear that for some of these teachers, their skills in mathematics are low enough that it could inhibit their ability to be effective at teaching students who are studying math at a higher level.

As noted in the literature review, the K-12 literature demonstrates the link between content knowledge and teacher quality, as well as the link between content knowledge and student achievement (AIR, 2006; Lucas et al.; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Lucas et al.; 2005; USDOE, 2002). Although the results of this study cannot be generalized to the population of adult literacy teachers, and although the scores do not reflect means for the broader field of instructors, based on the results of the IALS (2001) and the NALS (2002), their performance is what I would expect from the average American adult, and based on current hiring practices, it is what I would anticipate from the broader field of instructors. To be clear, the discussion of the lack of preparation of participants, their lack of fluency with mathematics is not in any way intended to be an indictment of the instructors. What this speaks to is the inadequacy of current hiring policies, the inadequacy of the current professional development delivery system, and the

inadequacy of a general college education alone to provide the necessary content knowledge needed to teach adult literacy learners.

To ask instructors to take the risk of participating in this portion of the study where they were asked to take this test, share their group scores, and be willing to discuss with their peers that they do not feel prepared to teach the content that they are responsible for teaching is a huge request. I struggled with asking instructors to do this, but felt very strongly that unless someone was willing to take the risk, and until someone was willing to challenge the assumptions that anyone with a degree was equipped to do this work, the field could continue to ignore instructors' real needs. I have great respect for the instructors who stepped up to that challenge. Some of the instructors were visibly agitated during the test session, and exhibited some of the same behaviors that students exhibit when entering a test situation (trouble with the mouse, difficulty logging into the computer, making jokes about how poorly they might do, etc.). Their willingness to push past that, to me, represents a strong indication of their desire to confront current practices and be a part of the conversation about change in the field.

Research Question 3: What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice

Content of past professional development.

Instructors were asked to indicate the types of professional development that they have received in the last academic year. When asked about the content of professional development attended, instructors in the Survey Only group indicated that the professional development that they received centered largely on instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing, and strategies for integrating technology into the

classroom. Only one participant indicated that professional development focused on opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development. Instructors in the Focus Group indicated that the professional development that they received centered largely on instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing, and strategies for teaching mathematics effectively. This was followed closely by strategies to recognize and accommodate adults with learning differences, and strategies to prepare learners for work or careers. The content of professional development in which instructors participated during the last academic year is summarized in Table 15.

Table 15
Content of Instructors' Professional Development

	<i>Survey Group</i>		<i>Focus Group</i>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Answer options				
Instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing effectively	66.67%	33.33%	62.50%	37.50%
Instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	33.33%	66.67%	71.43%	28.57%
Instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	22.22%	77.78%	50.00%	50.00%
Instructional strategies for teaching in content areas	33.33%	66.67%	50.00%	50.00%
Investigating effective lesson/curriculum planning	22.22%	77.78%	28.57%	71.43%
Opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development	11.11%	88.89%	50.00%	50.00%

Strategies for recognizing and	44.44%	55.56%		
accommodating adults with learning			71.43%	28.57%
differences				
Exploring classroom techniques for	22.22%	77.78%		
determining learner needs and learning styles			50.00%	50.00%
Help learners meet their goals for work,	44.44%	55.56%		
family and self			42.86%	57.14%
Accommodating widely varied ability levels	33.33%	66.67%		
in the same classroom			42.86%	57.14%
Integrating technology into the classroom	66.67%	33.33%	57.14%	42.86%

Past professional development and instructional decision-making.

Instructors were asked to describe the extent to which past professional development activities inform their choice of curriculum and instructional strategies. Eight instructors from the Survey Only group felt the professional development that they have received through the ABLE system has been helpful in guiding their teaching methods. “The professional development I have received usually informs me of curriculum and strategies that are useful, practical and pertinent.” Four instructors felt professional development has not been helpful in influencing their choice of instructional materials and strategies. Instructors in the Focus Group indicated that professional development has been helpful in identifying materials and strategies to use for professional development. One participant wrote, “The professional development that I have chosen has provided me with additional resources to choose from (web sites, books, supplementary materials), and teaching strategies to add to my repertoire [sic].”

Instructors were asked to rate the contribution of past professional development on their instructional practices. Instructors in the Survey Only group rated independent professional reading as the most useful source of professional development. Survey Group instructors' ratings of the contributions of eight other forms of professional development are exhibited in Table 16.

Table 16

Survey Instructors' Ratings of Contribution of Past Professional Development

Answer Options	Did not participate	Least useful	Somewhat useful	Useful	Very useful	Rating average
Independent reading	0	1	1	5	3	4.00
Internet courses,	0	1	2	4	2	3.78
Workshops provided by colleagues	0	1	1	5	1	3.75
Conferences	3	0	0	2	3	3.25
Workshops conducted by consultants	1	1	4	1	1	3.00
Collaborative work with teachers	2	0	1	5	1	3.33
University Courses	4	1	0	3	1	2.56
Serving on a committee	4	2	2	0	0	1.75
Inquiry based projects	4	1	2	0	0	1.71

Focus Group instructors were also asked to rate the contribution of past professional development based on its usefulness in helping them to make instructional decisions. Instructors rated workshops provided by consultants as the most useful form of professional development, followed by workshops presented by colleagues. This assessment is exhibited in Table 17.

Table 17

Contribution of Past Professional Development

Answer Options	Did Not Participate	Least Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful	Rating Average
Workshops provided by colleagues	0	1	0	2	5	4.38
Workshops conducted by consultants	0	0	0	4	4	4.33
Independent professional reading	0	0	5	1	1	3.43
Collaborative work with teachers	2	0	2	1	2	3.14
Internet courses, listservs	2	2	0	1	2	2.86
Serving on a committee	5	0	1	1	1	2.13
Inquiry based projects	5	0	0	1	1	2.00
University Courses	5	0	2	0	0	1.57

Focus Group Instructors' Rating of the Contribution of Professional Development

Six out of ten respondents in the Survey Only group found workshops presented by colleagues to be useful. Focus Group members found workshops presented by colleagues (N=7) and workshops presented by outside consultants (N=8) to be very useful. Seven instructors from the Focus Group and Survey Group participated in University courses as professional development. One participant considered this to be the least useful professional development while one participant found it somewhat useful. The remaining five found university courses to be useful. One limitation of the study was that instructors were not asked to share the content of the university courses that instructors are taking. This information would have provided some idea of the relevance of the courses taken, and whether they contribute to instructors' content knowledge or pedagogical knowledge.

PD fills a gap.

Instructors indicated that professional development offerings supplement their formal education, bridging the knowledge gap for those without a background in education or experience in teaching adults. Where instructors' formal education may not have been in education, or in the five GED content areas, instructors were able to learn about instructional strategies and approaches to teaching content through professional development. Debra described this as follows:

Sometimes PD fills a gap like between your formal education. A lot of people who come into ABLE don't have like a background in teaching, or a bachelor's in education so for those who don't have that background or credential, it fills in the gap.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Networking and idea sharing.

Instructors found that professional development provides them with opportunities to network and share strategies and resources with other instructors, and to discuss what works in the literacy classroom. Debra found the idea sharing that occurs during these events to be particularly helpful. Luke shared that sharing experiences with other instructors can sometimes provide a different perspective of looking at a situation or problem, and different approaches to addressing challenges that arise in the literacy classroom. One benefit of this networking is that they were encouraged by conversations with other instructors, and comforted to know that they were not alone in their experiences, and that there were other people who understood their challenges. This was particularly helpful for Liz, who like many of the participants, works in relative isolation, being the only instructor at her site. She commented, “The Literacy Cooperative was helpful because I at least got to network with other people because of like...cause coming into it, I didn’t know who my ‘go-to people’ were (Liz, May, 2012).”

Variety of delivery formats.

Instructors indicated that available professional development comes in a variety of delivery formats. This allowed instructors greater flexibility in accessing professional development. Online and alternative delivery methods allowed instructors to access PD without having to drive far, or spend time and money accessing PD (fuel for cars, hotels, tolls). Instructors have attended workshops, participated in webinars, and attended the OAACE conference. Some instructors indicated that they also learn from reading information that will help them.

Instructors also noted an inconsistency in quality among available offerings, experiencing some really good professional development and some bad sessions. Monica described her hit and miss experiences as follows:

I would also say that some of these have been really good ones which is not many of them...they maybe look at a problem from a different perspective, so....

I have picked some good PD, but some have been horrible, I mean REALLY bad. So much that I have forgotten what they were. The ones on technology, where the technology wasn't working or the person just read it and gave us a printed copy...I've sat through a couple of those, or where it comes to the Q & A, and that is when you really see the frustration of the teachers and they are so resistant with like, how do you do this, if you don't do this, and it gets discouraging and I really want to get outta there but I've got to get my certificate.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Introduction to new resources, knowledge, and approaches.

Instructors learned about new resources through their attendance at professional development activities. This learning comes from the professional development designers as well as their colleagues who participate. Alice noted the value in these interactions for her was that it pointed her toward what was useful, and prevented her from wasting time, effort, or money on strategies or products that didn't work. She stated, "Sometimes people will say, 'Well I use this and it works really well,' so then you know it won't be a waste of time or money for you to try it." These resources consisted of instructional materials, references for instructors, and references for students.

Instructors picked up some instructional approaches through professional

development, for example, Debra found that professional development helped her learn alternative approaches to instruction, and to use materials outside of the GED book.

Alice provided some of these approaches that she has learned from attending professional development. They included creating memorable learning experiences for learners, incorporating different learning styles (for example using rhythm, music, and humor), and getting students to interact with and help one other reach their goals.

Instructors felt that participating in professional development activities has helped them to understand the adult literacy learner population better. This professional development focused on learning how to create lessons that hold students' interests and keeps them motivated. Liz spoke several times during the focus group activity about how much she felt it was important to learn about students' backgrounds, providing examples of professional development that she had attended outside of literacy. She felt that learning about addiction and attending training on "Bridges out of Poverty" have helped her to understand the challenges that adult literacy students face.

Instructors appreciated professional development activities where they learned practical skills that could be implemented immediately. Joyce stressed that if the learning is not immediately applicable, it never gets implemented, stating, "A lot of times I get a folder and it goes right in a box. Having something I can go to and use it the next day is helpful (Joyce, May, 2012)."

Instructors indicated that they were more likely to use strategies if they were provided with all of the tools as a part of the professional development activity. Monica shared:

I went to math camp once and that was the second best just because it was all practical stuff and we went home with a resource bag....it had all kinds of

manipulatives in it. I guess I like freebies. I did a DIY professional development, so I shadowed a teacher who showed me how to go back to phonics and get non-readers to read.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland.

Instructors noted that often what administrators at their program sites considered as professional development would more appropriately be called staff meetings. In those meetings they reviewed protocols and procedures for tracking accountability measures or to report to funders, but did not cover tools, skills, resources, or information that would assist them in helping students. Instructors shared that they benefitted from the professional development offered through the Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland. These workshops are offered six to nine times per year, and cover topics that instructors indicate are areas of interest. Each session is three hours in length, providing instructors with research, resources, model lessons, and opportunities to network with other instructors.

I've probably gotten the most insight from Carmine herself, coming to those workshops because we haven't really had much where we are. We have those meetings but it's mostly about how to run the program, it's not how to teach the students, you know.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Instructors described that the emphasis on engaging students in active learning and involving the use of manipulatives helps them think differently about instructional approaches. Margaret shared:

A lot of the workshops I have gone to that you have done with the kits, that helped and getting me ideas for things to do, especially things like using the playing cards and things that I can do with adults in the classroom. And, just, thinking outside of the box about how to engage adult learners, just like we think outside the box about how to engage a child because they didn't have those skills either. In some things with the adults, the manipulatives might change, but I would still give them manipulatives because that is what they needed to succeed.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

Monica indicated that the benefit of the workshops provided by the Literacy Cooperative is that the strategies shared are practical, and that it does impact her own learning. She stated,

I loved all, I think I told you on the phone, I've been to two or three things that you've presented and I always come away feeling like I learned something, this was practical, I can use this tomorrow, and it really adapts how I've learned.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Although instructors spoke favorably about the professional development experiences received through the Literacy Cooperative (many that provided them with materials to take back to their classes), while visiting literacy sites to conduct interviews for this study, none of the approaches introduced in those workshops were observed. This observation supports research findings that professional development should be embedded, and that this embedded professional development should maximize contact time, include follow-up activities, and allow instructors to address real world problems as described in the literature review (American Institutes for Research, 2006; Smith, 2010).

Although content is covered during these workshops to some extent, a three-hour workshop cannot provide the amount of content area knowledge that instructors need for adult literacy instruction.

Professional development from outside of literacy.

Instructors drew from a variety of work and professional development experiences to enhance their practice of adult literacy instruction. Previous professional development received outside of adult literacy, such as training in ministry or workshops that they attended during previous careers allowed instructors to bring resources from an array of sources. Richard shared how his military training prepared him for the classroom:

My military teaching helped me get organized with teaching different subject matter; taught me how to develop a lesson plan, or objectives to help me stay on track. Marine Corp teachings keep you flexible but structural. My professional development received as a GM tech helped me to be more hands-on about class work.

(Richard, May, 2012)

Karen indicated that her previous work experience provided her with access to the programmed instructional materials that sites use to help students practice literacy skills via the computer. She also referenced working in a context where the environment that was similar to the environments from which many of her students come, and how this helped her see the students in a different light. She shared:

I worked at Job Corps and learned about the TABE, we used PLATO at job corps so AZTEC was easy and that is where I got my basis with adult literacy, and in

terms of being able to be supportive my background in counseling and the fact that I had worked in the corps for years was helpful, plus I come from a family of educators. I did the piece about urban environments in the Newark school system so I was used to dealing with poor, disenfranchised and giving clothes to them because they didn't have clothes and didn't have shoes. I learned early on that there were people who needed resources and when I first started doing the ABLE training and there was this book we were supposed to read and it talked about distinctions between the different classes and I realized the difference between me and the students I am teaching is [that I have] resources. I have resources that they don't have. I have supports that they don't have.

(Karen, May, 2012)

Research Question 4: What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?

To inform a model of professional development that would meet instructor needs, instructors were asked to provide information on areas where they would like additional training within the five content areas that are covered on the GED test. Instructors were also asked to indicate the types of professional development they would like to attend in the future. Finally, instructors were asked to discuss the types of support they currently receive to engage in professional development, and to indicate forms of support that would be effective in helping them to engage in future professional development. While instructors were asked to respond to specifically identified areas of professional development in reading, writing, and math, instructors were asked generally about additional training needs in the social studies and science content areas.

Areas for additional content area training.

When asked to share their opinions on professional development needs in the content areas of science and social studies, instructors did not identify a need for additional training in teaching social studies, but indicated that they would like additional training in “how to integrate the new analytical writing for GED 2014 in both science and social studies. Instructors in both the Survey Only group and the Focus Group expressed a desire for more training in teaching science. One instructor in the Survey Only group stated, “I feel poorly qualified to teach these subjects other than by the book.” A second instructor in this group commented that, “Chemistry and Physics are still somewhat foreign languages to me. I would like to be more comfortable teaching these.” A third instructor from the Survey Only group explained “not enough time is spent in this area...because of low available materials.” Instructors in the Focus Group were also interested in “incorporating more (cost-effective) hands-on lessons in Science and bridging those activities with reading materials to build skills and improve test-readiness.”

Instructors did identify a few specific areas in science where they would like additional training. Two instructors mentioned areas for additional training related to their ability to prepare students for the science portion of the GED test in their responses. Those areas are:

- 1) Incorporating science and social studies with writing.
- 2) Relating science experiments to the questions used in the books and for testing.
- 3) Review of material for the new 2014 test, especially in regard to the short answer/extended response format.

4) Helping apply information.

The first content area addressed where instructors were given specific areas for potential professional development was reading. Helping learners with word attack and decoding strategies was the area where instructors in the Survey Only group were least interested in receiving additional professional development. Motivating learners to read, and recognizing reading disabilities were two areas within the reading content area that Survey Only instructors indicated they would like additional training. Focus Group instructors identified these same two areas, but were equally interested in receiving professional development on learning which models of instruction are effective with adult learners. The remaining areas where teachers in the Survey Only Group and the Focus Group would like additional training as reading instructors are exhibited in Figures 6 and 7, respectively.

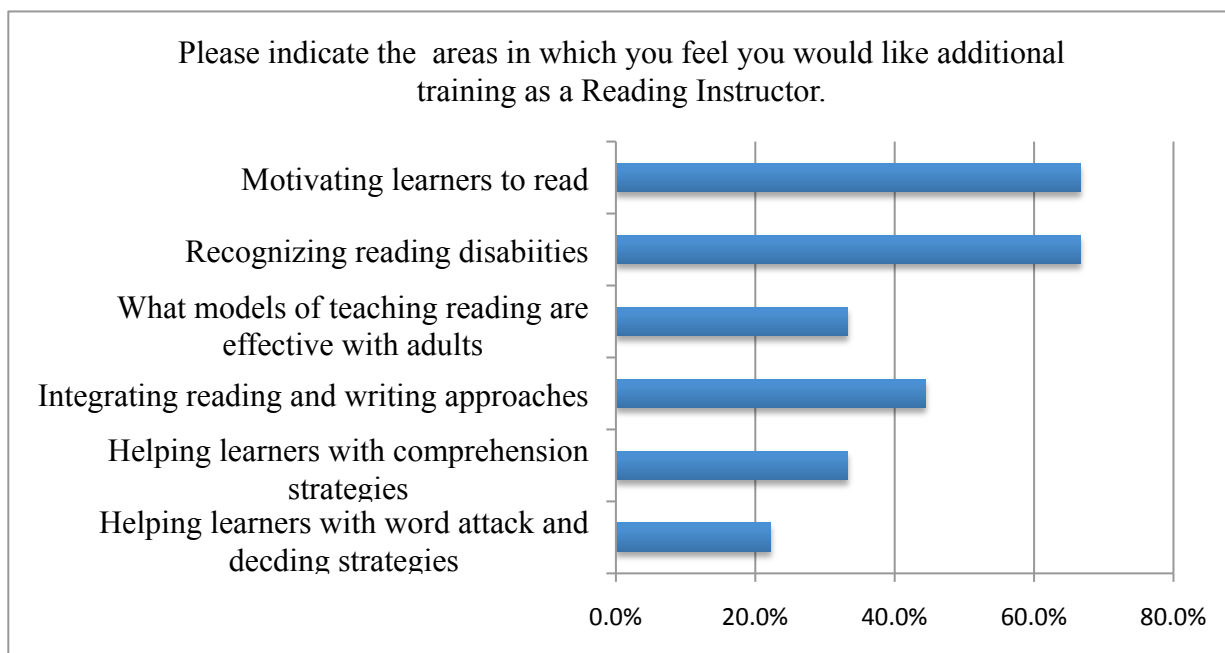


Figure 6. Survey Only additional training in reading.

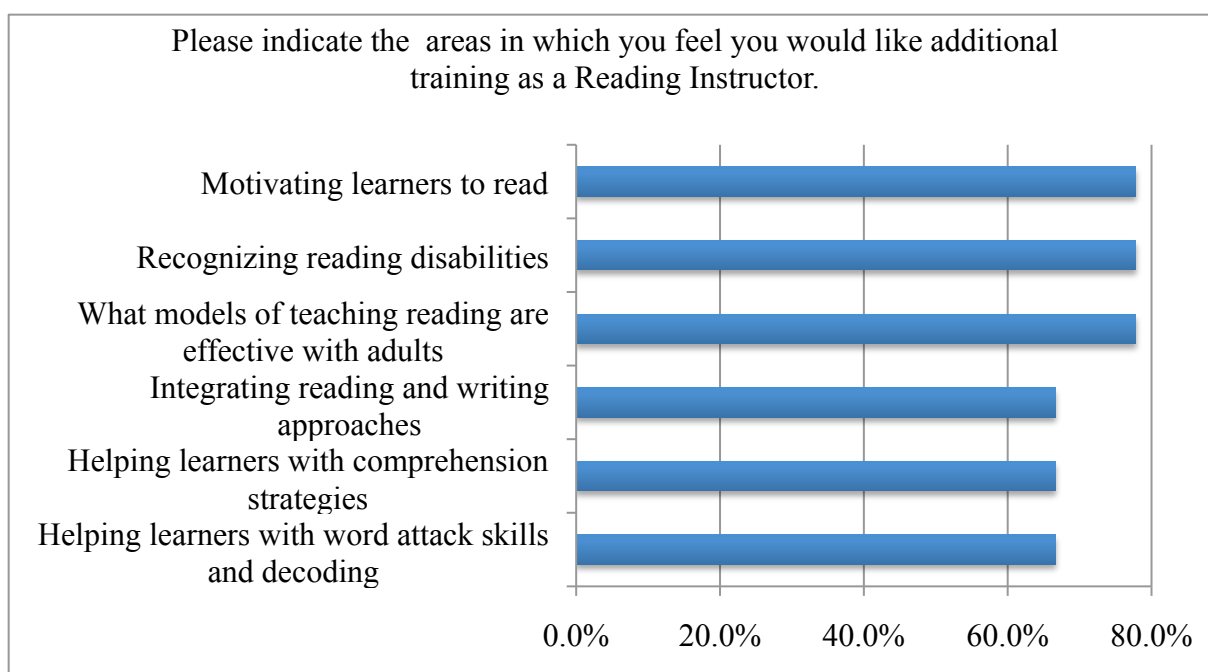


Figure 7. Focus Group additional training in reading.

Instructors were asked to identify areas where they would like additional training in the writing content area. During the focus group activity instructors spoke about the challenges of getting students to write essays, citing students' reluctance to write. For the current version of the GED test, students have to write a five-paragraph essay, but were not required to do much writing for any other content area. For the new version of the GED test, which is currently in development, designers are hoping to test students on measures that are important for workplace writing and postsecondary education. When the new test is released in 2014, writing is required for all five content areas, meaning that writing skills will be even more important to student success. Instructors expressed a need to help prepare students for writing across the content areas in preparation for 2014 test. Areas where instructors in the Survey Only group and Focus Group would like additional training as writing instructors are presented in Figures 8 and 9.

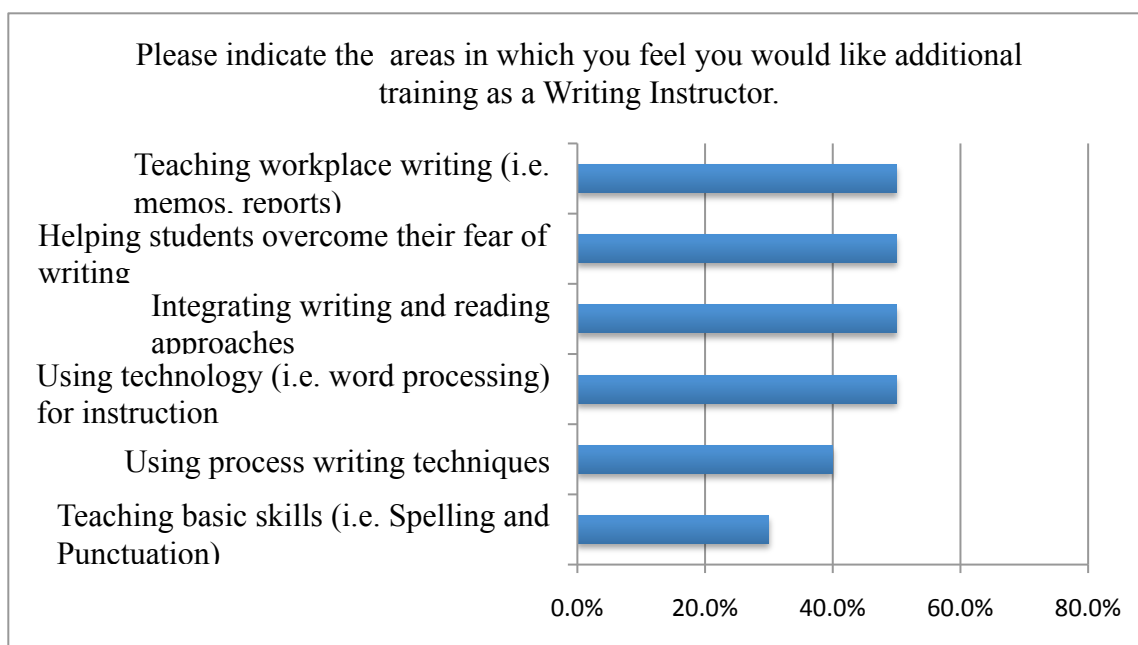


Figure 8. Survey Only group additional training in writing.

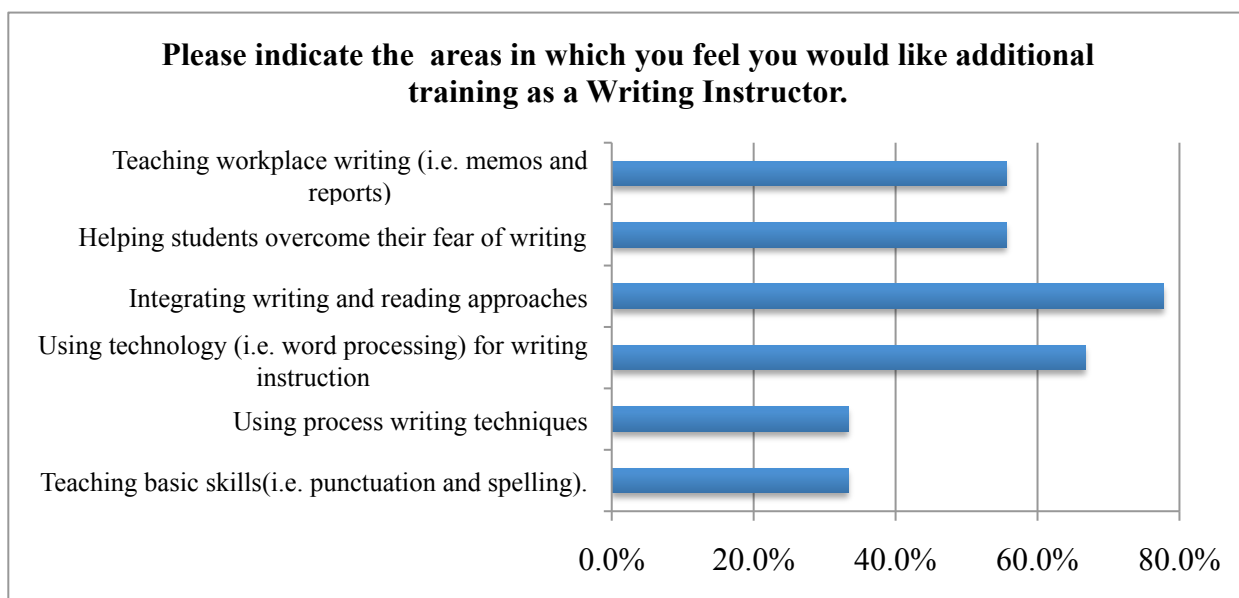


Figure 9. Focus Group training in writing.

Instructors in the Survey Only group were asked to identify areas where they would like additional training in the mathematics content area. The two areas where instructors felt they needed the most additional training in mathematics were helping learners develop problem solving skills, and using technology for instruction. Instructors

did not feel the need for additional instruction in teaching basic mathematics skills.

Instructors also demonstrated confidence in their ability to help students to understand decimals, fractions, and percentages. Areas where instructors indicated they would like additional training in mathematics are captured in Figure 10. Instructors' perceptions of confidence in teaching basic mathematics skills, and in helping students to understand decimals, fractions, and percentages are reflected in the absence of bars in Figure 10.

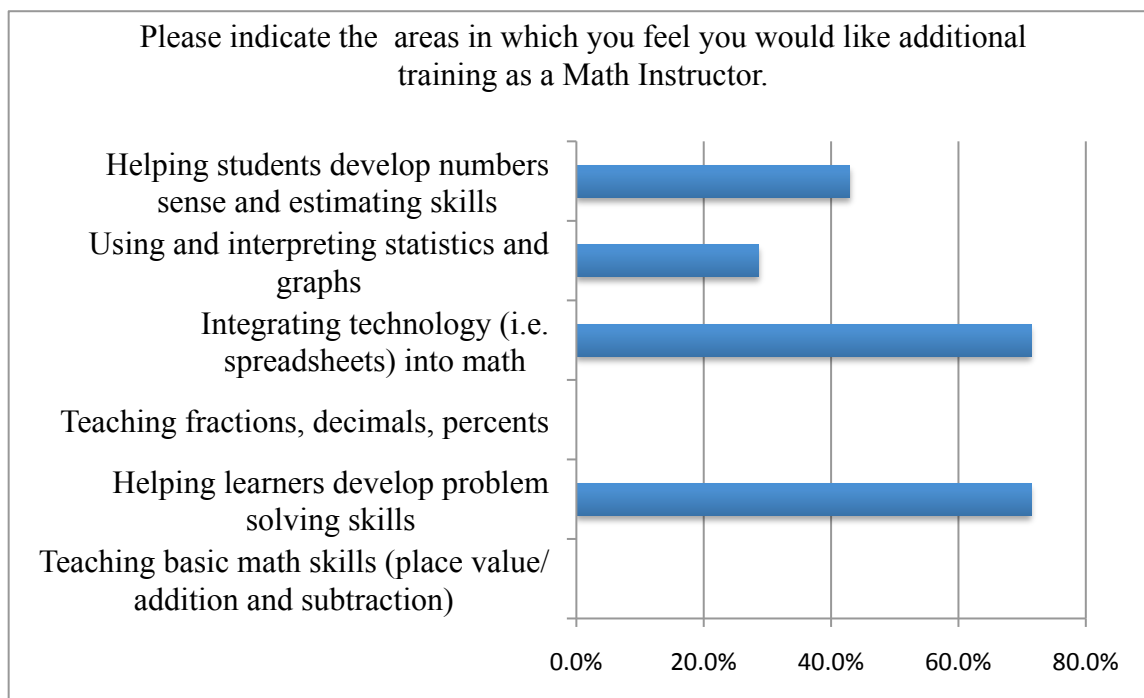


Figure 10. Survey Group additional training in math.

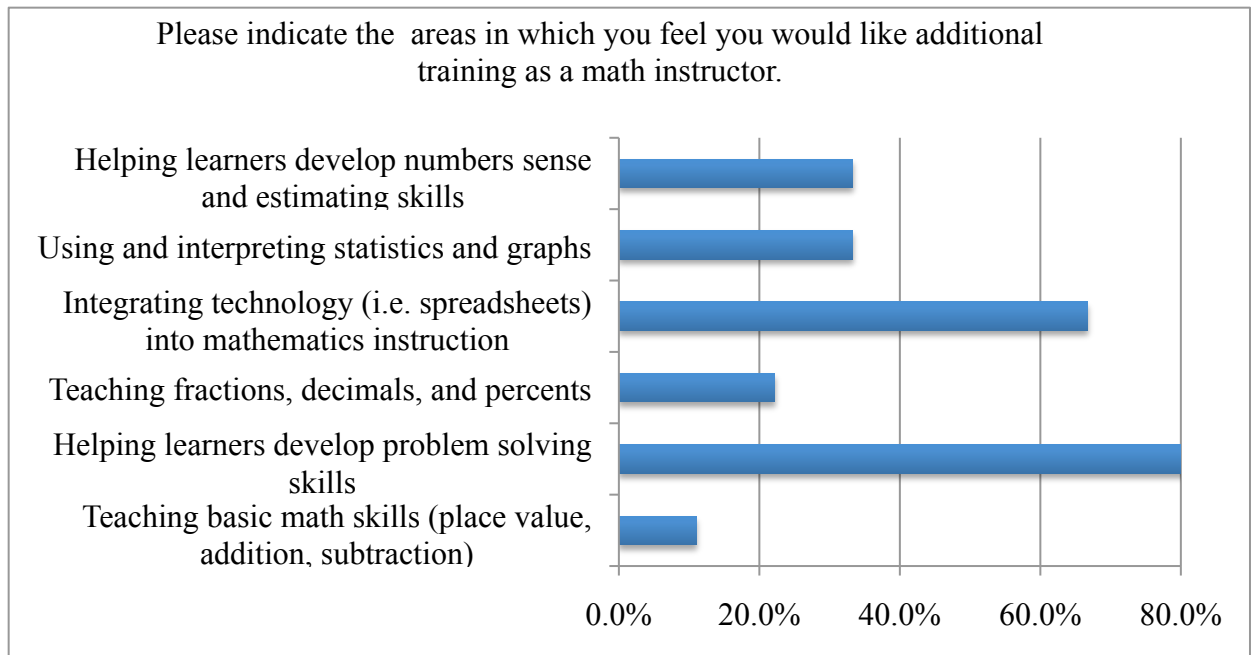


Figure 11. Focus Group additional training in mathematics.

Instructors in the Survey Only group and the Focus Group identified four areas where they wanted additional training for teaching writing. Those areas were helping students overcome their fear of writing, integrating writing and reading approaches, integrating technology into writing instruction, and teaching workplace writing. When asked to identify areas where they would like additional training in the reading content area, instructors in the both the Survey Only Group and the Focus Group indicated that they would like additional training on motivating learners to read and recognizing reading disabilities. The Survey Only group also wanted training on integrating reading and writing approaches. The Focus Group members wanted training on learning models of instruction that are effective with adults.

As noted in the literature review, adult literacy programs need to incorporate instruction in the direct teaching of all five components of reading instruction, particularly if their programs are serving learners with learning disabilities (NCSALL,

2002). When instructors can draw on these tools, they are more likely to help students improve reading skills and experience greater success in literacy programs. Instructors need direct instruction to help students develop reading comprehension strategies and be able to apply those comprehension strategies to enhance understanding as a critical part of impacting student achievement (NRP, 2000).

When instructors were asked to identify areas where they would like additional training in the mathematics content areas, they did not feel the need for additional instruction in basic math skills, demonstrated confidence in their ability to help students to understand decimals, fractions, and percentages, but noted that additional training in helping learners develop problem solving skills, and using technology for instruction would be helpful. Instructors. Lucas (2007) indicated that since instructors hail from a wide range of backgrounds, instructors should be assessed, and training should be based on the needs and knowledge gaps of trainees. Some instructors in the study felt they had had pedagogic knowledge but need additional subject knowledge, and others expressed comfort with subject knowledge, but felt they need additional training in instructional strategies.

An interesting observation was that some instructors indicated that they do not spend time on science and social studies instruction because they feel that if students can do well on the reading portion of the test, they should also be able to do well on the science and social studies portions of the test. While at the same time, instructors who responded to the survey indicated that they did not feel well versed in these areas themselves. Carol, an instructor from the Survey Only group, stated, “I feel poorly qualified to teach these subjects other than by the book (Carol, May, 2012),” and a

second instructor, Diane, commented that, “Chemistry and Physics are still somewhat foreign languages to me. I would like to be more comfortable teaching these (Diane, May, 2012).” The literature on reading comprehension speaks of the importance of vocabulary to reading fluency, and the importance of reading fluency to reading comprehension. Both science and social studies are vocabulary rich content areas, which introduce critical terms and concepts that must be understood for readers to develop fluency and comprehension in those areas, yet instructors are neglecting to teach science and social studies, relying solely on students’ reading skills to get them through content that instructors themselves find challenging. The National Reading Panel (2002) reported that:

Teachers not only must have a firm grasp of the content presented in text, but also must have substantial knowledge of the strategies themselves, of which strategies are most effective for different students and types of content and of how best to teach and model strategy use (NRP, 2000).

Need for training in integrating technology.

Beyond the five content areas on the GED test, there is one additional area where instructors acknowledged additional training would be critical to future student success, and that is in the area of computer literacy. Instructors noted the need for computer literacy in the workforce, and the need for basic computer literacy to enter the workforce given that even jobs paying minimum wage are moving toward accepting only electronic applications. Liz stated:

We need to [help with computer studies]; that’s a big area, and that’s really frustrating because our students will say “I just don’t use a computer.” Well,

guess what, that's not going to be an option for you. I'm sorry. Do you want to get paid more than minimum wage? You're going to have to learn to use a computer. McDonald's make you apply on the Internet now, you can't apply on paper.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Instructors noted the lack of access to computers at some sites being a barrier to incorporating computer literacy into literacy instruction. Richard noted that he viewed providing students with access to computers as a necessity, and shared that for the sites where he teaches where there are no computers available he brings in his laptop. Luke indicated that there is a program that is housed within his building where students can go to get trained on computer skills, but overall instructors felt that programs should have computers on site. Liz mentioned that she requested that the agency that houses her program install computers for clients to use. She described arguing that not training students in computer literacy did them a disservice. She shared that as a result the agency did plan to install computers for student use.

After the conversation about students needing computer literacy skills, instructors mentioned that professional development should increase instructors' capacity to build students' computer literacy skills. Instructors shared the challenge of integrating technology into instruction, and indicated that their own lack of computer literacy skills presents a barrier to incorporating technology. Instructors indicated that student's computer literacy levels only carry them so far as being able to access the Internet, but a few instructors indicated that web access is the extent of their knowledge as well. One instructor commented, "My computer skills are not that great."

I don't know about your students but other than getting on the Internet they are pretty much illiterate. Many of them don't even know that (Liz, May, 2012).

Our tutors don't know that. My computer skills are not that great. Professional development should increase instructors' comfort with computers (Helen, May, 2012).

When asked to describe what materials they use during instruction. Two instructors in the Survey Only group indicated that they used technology as a component of their typical instructional strategy. Five Focus Group members reported that they use computers in instruction. Seventy percent of the instructors indicated that they do not incorporate technology and computer use into their instructional practices. Of those that do, many rely on the programmed instructional materials that are designed for literacy learners, so the extent of that technological education is on using the mouse.

In 2014 the entire GED test will be a computer-based test that contains significantly more writing than earlier versions of the test, especially in the area of mathematics (GED Testing Service, 2012). This means that students will be expected (within a timed test session) to use the keyboard for entering test answers, particularly during the essay portion of the test. Students often have difficulty signing into the basic skills programs, and some of the instructors in this study were hunting and pecking their log-ins during the TABE test session. If instructors are not empowered to incorporate technology into their instruction, student success on the GED test, particularly the computer-based version debuting in 2014, is threatened.

I don't know. It all makes sense. From what I understand technology is going to be stressed because of the change of the GED [exam]. In the one room where I

started we didn't have computers or access to the computers when we were still getting treated like step-children in the program.

(Debra, May, 2012)

Types of professional development desired.

Instructors were asked to identify professional development activities that they would like to have available. Instructors in both the Survey Only group and the Focus Group indicated that they were most interested in learning instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively. Instructors in the Survey Only group were equally interested in learning instructional strategies for teaching reading effectively. The future professional development interests of instructors in the Survey Only group and the Focus Group are provided in Tables 18 and 19 respectively.

Table 18

Survey Group Instructors' Interests for Future Professional Development

Answer Options	Very interested	Interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
Instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing effectively	55.56%	22.22%	11.11%	11.11%
Instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	44.44%	22.22%	22.22%	11.11%
Instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	40.00%	20.00%	10.00%	30.00%
Instructional strategies for teaching in content areas	33.33%	22.22%	33.33%	11.11%

Investigating effective lesson/curriculum planning	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%	11.11%
Opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development	33.33%	33.33%	22.22%	11.11%
Strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences				
Exploring classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style	33.33%	22.22%	33.33%	11.11%
Help learners meet their goals for work, family and self	30.00%	40.00%	-	30.00%
Accommodating widely varied ability levels within the same classroom	22.22%	33.33%	44.44%	-
Integrating technology into the classroom	22.22%	22.22%	33.33%	22.22%

Table 19

Focus Group Instructors' Interests for Future Professional Development

Answer Options	Very interested	Interested	Somewhat interested	Not interested
Instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing effectively	62.5%	25.0%	12.5%	-
Instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively	87.5%	12.5%	-	-
Instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers	50.0%	37.5%	12.5%	-
Instructional strategies for teaching in content areas	75.0%	12.5%	12.5%	-
Investigating effective lesson/curriculum planning	37.5%	25.0%	25.0%	12.5%
Opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	-
Strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences	12.5%	62.5%	25.0%	-
Exploring classroom techniques for determining	37.5%	37.5%	25.0%	-

learner needs and learning style				
Help learners meet their goals for work, family and self	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%	-
Accommodating widely varied ability levels within the same classroom	62.5%	12.5%	25.0%	-
Integrating technology into the classroom	62.5%	25.0%	-	12.5%

Accommodating a wide variety of skill levels in one classroom, and investigating effective lesson and curriculum planning were the next most popular options for professional development. Instructors shared that they struggle to keep all students engaged when student ability levels can cover such a wide range. Students who are in the higher EFLs move through material more rapidly. They frequently approach instructors to request their next assignment, and often need help understanding algebra and geometry. Recall from the literature that the National Reporting System (NRS) classifies adult literacy students by educational functioning levels (EFLs). Students in the lower EFLs often move more slowly through content, but require more one on one attention. Instructors need strategies to accommodate such a broad range if they are going to continue to have such a broad range of students in their classes.

Support for professional development.

Instructors were asked to describe the types of support they have received for

professional development. The three most common types of support reported were stipends for professional development, reimbursement for professional development, or professional development offered during paid time. No instructors indicated that they received tuition reimbursement as a form of support for professional development. Instructors in the Focus Group reported that they have received professional development during paid hours, release time from work, and stipends for attending professional development. Other supports that instructors in the Survey Only group and the Focus Group received are provided in Figures 12 and 13, respectively.

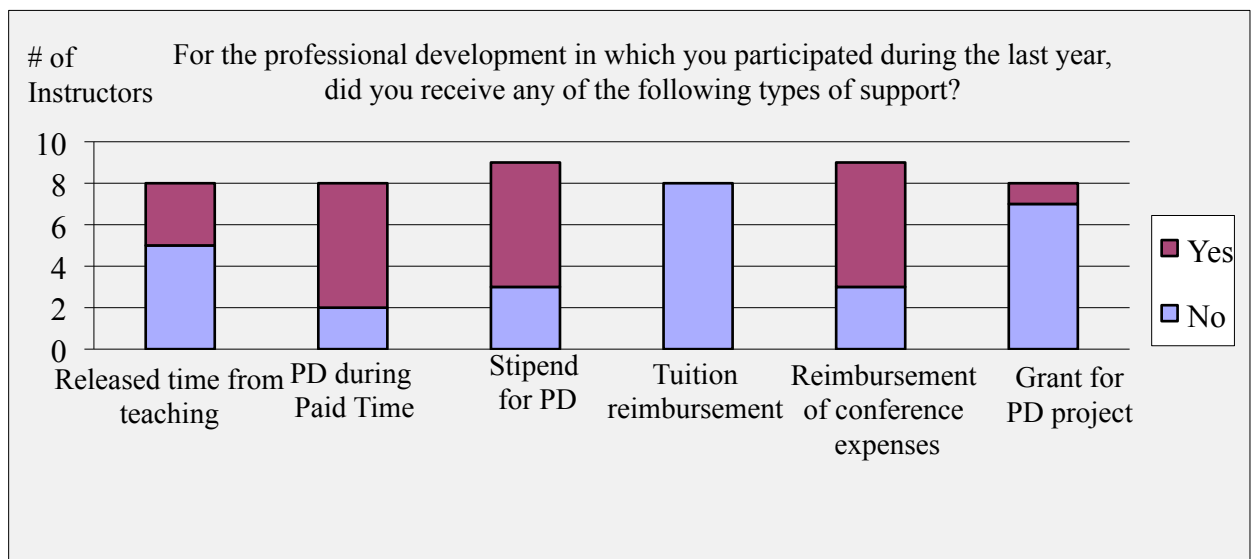


Figure 12. Survey Only professional development support.

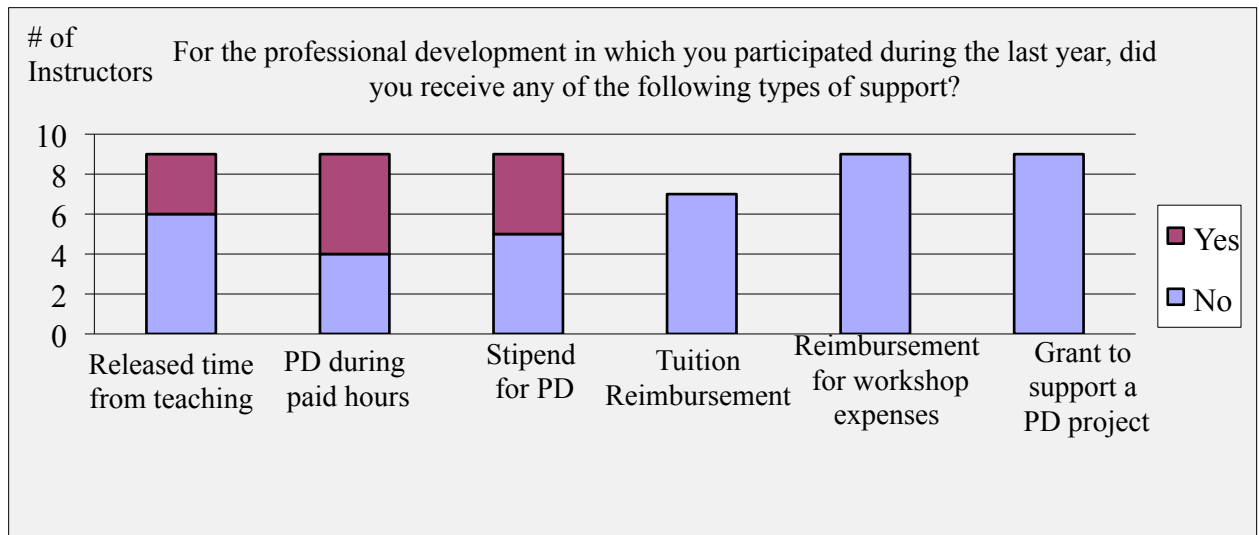


Figure 13. Focus Group professional development support.

Instructors were asked to describe the types of support that they would like to receive for professional development. The support category with the highest response average among the Survey Only group was grants to support special professional development projects, followed by professional development offered during paid time. For Focus Group members release time from teaching was the support category with the highest response average, followed tuition reimbursement. The preferences for support for instructors in the Survey Only Group and the Focus Group are represented in Tables 20 and 21, respectively.

Table 20

Survey Only Instructors' Desired Support for Professional Development

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Grant to support a special professional development project	2.00	8	4
Scheduled professional development time within the hours for which you are paid	1.83	11	6

Reimbursement for conference or workshop fees and expenses	1.67	10	6
Released time from teaching	1.67	5	3
Stipend for professional development activities that take place outside of work hours.	1.63	13	8
Full or partial reimbursement for tuition for university based courses	1.33	8	6

Table 21

Focus Group Instructors' Support Desired for Professional Development

Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
Released time from teaching	2.33	7	3
Full /partial reimbursement for tuition for university courses	2.00	16	8
Grant to support a special professional development project	1.80	9	5
Reimbursement for conference or workshop expenses	1.60	8	5
Scheduled professional development time within paid hours	1.00	2	2

Priorities for accessing professional development.

Instructors were asked to indicate their top three priorities for accessing professional development. The top priority for instructors in the Survey Only group was

adding to their knowledge about teaching adults. The area that instructors indicated was their lowest priority for accessing professional development was learning to incorporate technology into instruction. Participants in the Focus Group indicated that their top priority for professional development was to learn how other instructors conduct their practice. Improving classroom management skills was rated as the lowest priority for accessing professional development for the instructors in the Survey Only group. Surprisingly, content knowledge was the fifth highest priority among the Survey Only group, and was rated as the 7th or 8th priority for instructors in the Focus Group. Other identified priorities for professional development for instructors in the Survey Only group and the Focus Group are listed in Table 22.

Table 22

Survey Only and Focus Group Instructors' Priorities for Professional Development

Answer Options	Survey Only	Focus Group
	Response Average	Response Average
To learn techniques that I can use immediately.	1.33	1.14
Learn about how people learn in different content areas	2.00	2.00
Add to my instructional skills	1.50	2.50
To increase my cultural competence/diversity awareness	2.00	1.67
Add to my knowledge about teaching adults	2.20	2.25
Know where to access instructional resources	1.33	2.00
Learn how other teachers conduct their practice	2.00	2.67
Learn to incorporate technology into instruction	1.00	1.50
Improve classroom management skills	1.50	1.00
Improve my content knowledge	1.67	1.50

Imagining a model for professional development.

Instructors in the Focus Group and Interview Group were asked to imagine a model of professional development that would adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction. Monica indicated that she believed there should be an undergraduate level credential: “There should be some type of certification degree outside of K-12 certification.” Margaret also offered support for an undergraduate program to prepare adult literacy educators. Instructors offered many features that they considered to be necessary ingredients for effective professional development. These ingredients provide a snapshot of instructors’ beliefs about both the content and the format of professional development.

Content knowledge.

Instructors believed professional development should build content area knowledge. In the area of science, instructors indicated that they didn’t feel familiar enough with the science content to teach it comfortably, leading some teachers to avoid the science content area altogether. Instructors indicated that formal education has provided them with a foundation for learning, but that they would like to receive professional development that deepens their understanding of the specific content covered on the GED test.

Do I think adult literacy educators need specific instruction in content areas?

Definitely. (Margaret)

My assistant has a social services background, social work, so he has not done education, he is learning, if he was to be the teacher....he can learn it if he is willing, but a certification type of thing that is not necessarily tied to an education

background would be good. So much of what we do is just strategizing.

(Monica)

A content-based model (science and social studies) that provides adequate content knowledge and application in a real world manner would be good. (Joyce)

And you have to show them how the content builds. Cause each subject requires different set of skills when teaching and math. We have books that are not in the order that students need to learn math. (Alice)

Instructors' agreed that the most important ingredient for professional development would be to have it build content area knowledge. This is consistent with findings and recommendations in the research that content knowledge impacts student achievement, and that teachers must be trained in what to teach as well as in how to teach (Lucas, 2007; USDOE, 2002). Instructors in the Focus Group and Interview Only group felt that the amount of content knowledge required to prepare students for the GED requires specific instruction in the content areas. While instructors maintained that their formal education has provided them with an educational foundation and has equipped them with different approaches than are presented in the GED review books, it was clear from their discussion of their instructional experiences and their experience with taking the basic skills test that there needs to be additional training in the content areas if instructors are going to be able to assist students with mastering content. If instructors who are degreed, and have several years of experience teaching this content still have enough difficulty with the material that they are not able to complete a basic skills test in the allotted time, it is no wonder that students attempt to take the test and are not able to remember the content that they spent a week or two on just months before the test

session. Instructors under the current model basically spoon-feed facts and algorithms to students to memorize, and students regurgitate as much as they can hold for the test. After the test session, students know little more than they did before they enrolled, because what occurred was more memorization than learning. Current models of teacher preparation perpetuate a binge purge cycle that can only be described as bulimic education, and students leave our doors as nutritionally deficient as they were when they came.

Instructors must master the content and have a conceptual understanding of concepts before they can help students develop a concrete understanding of concepts. Students must have an understanding of concrete concepts before they can progress to semi-concrete, and then abstract understanding of concepts as is recommended, especially for students with learning disabilities (Kenyon, 2000).

Instructors indicated that the instruction should also provide guidance for the scope and sequence within each content area. Lessons within content areas build, so the order of instruction should build logically based on that. Instructors stated that some of the books that they have at their disposal do not progress in a logical sequence, so instructors who use those books as their curriculum will present content out of sequence. Instructors felt professional development could provide that guidance along with content knowledge and that this knowledge could be transmitted through certification that is not part of traditional teacher training.

Instructional models.

Instructors believed that professional development should provide them with instructional models, specifically for each subject, that they could replicate upon return to the

classroom. They indicated that these models should demonstrate how to present the information and the practical benefits for our modern society in a timely manner. Alice indicated that these models should provide case studies, discussions, and demonstrations. Debra added:

I would think they would need something structured like a science module, social studies model, and which order to present social studies. Teach the content areas. It should be a content-based model on math and social studies and then math and language arts, that provides application and practical, real world manner and organizational tips on when to present each one. Instructional methods for those content areas. The appropriate things to do.

(Debra, May, 2012)

For instructors that have not participated in methods courses where instructional strategies are introduced, or where a practicum requirement allowed them to see instructional strategies at work, they are left to draw from their experiences as students. Given the average age of participants in this study, instructors are likely drawing on educational models that are decades old, and were not designed for the adult literacy learner. Professional development then must model instructional models and strategies, and provide opportunities for instructors to incorporate the technology that students may be expected to use in the workforce as a tool for literacy instruction. This will become more and more important as technology becomes ever more present in our lives and as processes are automated or digitized (Lee & Mather, 2008).

Immediate practical application.

Instructors indicated that for professional development to be effective at improving their

instructional practice, it should have immediate, practical application.

People want something that they can use, so something practical information to use in the classroom. [It] should include takeaways, immediate activities and strategies that can be used with students; more purpose driven, making practical connections to their every day lives like the constitution. (Alice, May, 2012)

I want something functional that I can use with my students almost immediately.

I want PD that has specific take aways that, this is something I can actually do.

The Literacy Cooperative is great at doing this. (Karen, May, 2012)

Instructors who participated in the focus group activity and the interviews shared stories of attending workshops and not being able to remember what they were about, or walking away from workshops with no idea of how to implement strategies that they learned. Instructors also talked about the value of workshops where they were provided with the tools to implement lessons and strategies such as supplies, manipulatives, activities, or ideas as a part of the workshop experience. They found this to be helpful, and indicated that those are the types of professional development activities that “survive the weekend.”

Learning, development, and learning styles.

Instructors stressed the important of adult development and its impact on education.

They indicated that they would like professional development that includes information on adult learning and development and how to apply it. Luke remarked:

So you expect, how many years getting a high school teaching license and preschool teaching license doing like all those basic psychologies of development, why don't adult educators know the developmental issues that adults have?

(Luke, May, 2012)

Margaret felt that the professional development should go beyond informing instructors about adult learning and development theories. During her interview she added:

It should be real grounded in the theory, but be able to apply it in different situations. Meet each adult where they are at. Know a little bit about them. Give them a chance to know their story, so you know where they are coming from. You have to engage someone who comes from an abusive past differently than you would a thief or gangster. You would talk to them differently and treat them differently. Not in a disrespectful way. Sometimes a gangster is not going to respond to you talking to them in a mild tone of voice. Whereas if you raise your voice to someone who has been abused they are going to throw up a wall and shut down and that's it.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

Instructors were familiar with theories of multiple intelligences and the benefits of teaching to each student's learning styles. They shared that professional development should provide information on student learning styles and how instructors can use the information to aid learning. Margaret added that professional development should focus on the following:

Learning styles, what motivates adults, what is the best practice for class size.....if it is impacted by gender....to have that knowledge would be beneficial. Where do you go to get resources? We need more training on learning styles and how to reach students where they are.

(Margaret, May, 2012)

Data collection and data use.

All of the Focus Group and Interview Group instructors indicated that their programs collect data on the students, including their assessment scores, learning disability screenings, learning styles, and goals for entering literacy programs. Focus Group and interview participants indicated that they either did not personally collect student data, or that they collected data and turned it into program administrators. Monica shared her perspective on data use after working as an administrator, and now serving as an instructor:

As a teacher, when I used to do the testing part, I knew all of this stuff about the students, but I wasn't using it unless I was helping out in the classroom, or pulled out a small group, and I knew that, but that is why I want it on this paper, because how do I know that if someone else is doing the registration. When I meet with the student I see it one time, but I need to get that somehow where I can access it on a daily basis. I myself don't have that information because I am not doing that intake.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Current data collection procedures inhibit instructors from having access to the data to inform their instructional decision-making. As noted in the literature review, Smith (2010) writes about the benefit of examining student data to reflect on instructional practices as a component of job embedded professional learning. Instructors indicated that they were interested in professional development that would help them use assessment information and student data. Without it, instructors are left to invent ways to manage and track student progress.

One instructor, Monica, entered the field as an instructional assistant. Her chief responsibilities involved conducting assessments, and managing the student files. Through that experience she served as the liaison between program administrators and the instructors. This experience provided her the opportunity to learn what was important to administration and what was important to instructors. Focus Group instructors indicated that they are not really aware of program level goals, administrative needs, or their role in achieving administrative goals. Having this information from the administrative side and the instructor side has allowed Monica to begin developing a system that helps her track data for the accomplishment of instructional and administrative goals.

Pretty much I sit down with each student when they are done with the TABE and I just sort of interview them and based on their TABE, I know just by looking at it, what they need depending on what they missed on the test. Ultimately my goal is to have individual lesson plans for math and reading, and to keep it in their folder and I go through it, and I started to put what TABE they took and what they came in as, so I want to eventually put more information on here, so I'd like something that had their LD information and learning styles on it. We used to have old forms that had the learning styles on there. I write little notes for individual students. When I was an assistant, I had information color coded on the attendance sheet, like once they were past twelve hours they got a color, and once they were post tested they were another color (arrows if they went up a level).

(Monica, May, 2012)

Instructors would like professional development that addresses methods of collecting and tracking student data. They are interested in professional development that will help them use assessment information and student data to inform their instructional decisions and assessment practices. Having access to data could also help instructors communicate with students about their progress in the program, and progress toward individual goals.

Research and resources.

Instructors indicated that access to current research helped them to get a bigger picture of the prevalence of low literacy and its impacts on individuals, families, communities and economies. Instructors also learned the rationale behind theories and strategies when it was presented within the context of the research basis; it answered the question, “why should I try this?” Instructors heard about “research based best practices” but did not have a clear understanding of what that meant as observed by Edward and Luke during the focus group activity.

Edward: Well best practices, if there is such a thing as best practices I’ll agree with you on that. I think I have found that the conversations with most teachers are pretty much identical. Same problems, same trouble, same successes

Luke: Well different perspectives sometimes teachers have a different way of solving a problem you’ve tried, or seen something that you haven’t.

Edward: What works, what works, best practices, right.

(Edward and Luke, May, 2012)

Instructors believed that professional development should be grounded in research.

Debra felt that including the research helps to provide instructors with context. She stated, “In her workshops she gives a lot of research behind hers so we can kind of see a bigger picture like, how many people don’t have GEDs and how it pertains to real life (Debra, May, 2012).” Margaret added that while she is curious about what the research says, she would also like to know who the experts are in the field of literacy. She believed professional development that is grounded in research could provide that context.

Instructors also believed that professional development should include information about resources that they can access or that students might need to access, particularly if those resources would assist instructors in implementing best practices. For example, a best practice mentioned in the literature review advises instructors to conduct reading profile assessments to identify students’ specific needs in reading (NRP, 2000). Professional development around this topic should provide instructors with sample assessments that they can use, provide them with practice administering and scoring the assessments, and providing some information on how to know when the use of a particular assessment is merited. Karen stated, “Professionals need to be knowledgeable about resources that will be of aid to them. I would like to be able to point them [students] to resources. Where can they go to get help with this or that (Karen, May, 2012).”

Developed in concert with instructors and students.

Instructors had a lot to contribute to the discussion of what should be included in professional development. Naturally then, one key component of professional development would be that it be developed in concert with instructors. In the literature

review it was noted that Caffarella (2002) advocates that all stakeholders should be included at the planning table. This is an important component of professional development in adult literacy where instructors shared their beliefs that policymakers are not aware of the reality in the field. During this discussion, Debra yelled out, “We need somebody who understands what we do (Debra, May, 2012).” One instructor, Monica, who was interviewed for the study felt very strongly that what was missing from the instructors’ narrative was that professional development should be developed in concert with its beneficiaries and that this should include teachers and students. She stated:

Number one they need to come and visit a classroom, that irritates the crap out of me that all of these people who make all of the decisions don’t really know my students, don’t really know their lives, and they think, I don’t know what they think. They should visit many classrooms. They should not make any policies without input from actual teachers, and number three, they shouldn’t make any policies without the input of actual students.

(Monica, May, 2012)

Promotion of reflection.

Instructors identified interaction with peers as a benefit of past professional development, and indicated that professional development should include time to interact and share with peers. Interacting with peers provides instructors with opportunities to share information and resources with other instructors, to discuss strategies that work, and to reflect on how their classroom approaches and contexts differ from those of the other instructors. In addition to reflecting on practice in relation to other instructors, instructors

also felt that professional development should promote reflection on professional practice in general. Debra saw this as an opportunity to learn from positive examples, stating, “I think you have to reflect as an instructor as when did I see a good facilitation of learning and how did they do that (Debra, May, 2012)?” Alice emphasized that reflection is also necessary for instructors to develop self-awareness. She noted,

I work with someone who has been doing this for ten years and others have been doing it for sixteen. I’m the youngest one there. Those teachers think they have it all figured out and maybe they have, but my one colleague has a problem retaining her people.

(Alice, May, 2012)

Helps instructors understand the students.

Professional development should include information on the barriers facing the adult literacy population as well as information that guides instructors in helping students navigate those barriers. Instructors discussed barriers at length during the focus group activity. They felt strongly that professional development should acknowledge that adult learners have lives and face barriers that impact learning. For example, instructors discussed how financial strife that presents an immediate need to students will most likely take precedence over attending a literacy program that is not mandatory. In addition childcare, substance abuse, homelessness, and transportation issues can also serve as barriers to participation. Instructors felt additional training on how to address these issues, how to address them ethically and respectfully, and what resources are available for students within certain geographical areas would be helpful. Professional development then should include information on the barriers facing the adult literacy

population as well as information that guides instructors in helping students navigate those barriers. Alice shared her belief that many professional development initiatives or offerings fail to focus on the real issues that prevent students from succeeding. Edward shared his belief that student success is dependent upon instructors having that perspective into the challenges that they face. He stated:

Managing students, behavior, and expectations is absolutely critical to their success.

It is important to understand that the adult learner is beset with unseen and unknown obstacles that will affect them. I think that PD has to come from a broader understanding of the students' needs and the students' lifestyles. You have to understand the population that you're serving so that you come into the classroom with realistic expectations. Then you can understand how to address their needs as they attempt to pursue their goal of a GED education.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Liz added that with the number of students that she encounters who are struggling with chemical dependency, professional development in that area might also be helpful. She said:

You almost need an addiction awareness and how it affects people's learning. You know, so many people are in twelve step programs and they say you know I can't come tomorrow because I have to go to a meeting, or they are coming from transitional housing or something. Their life is in transition and they have been told to set these goals and GED is one of them. PD should include information on how alcohol and drug abuse needs and assessments of students. I had a student,

a few students who were just really struggling with basic reading and we didn't seem to make much progress, and I mentioned it to someone and they said that these kids may have been crack babies.

(Liz, May, 2012)

Debra spoke of wanting to learn how to help students broaden their horizons in terms of their educational backgrounds. She stated:

It can be so surprising to see students my age or older who have not been exposed to simple cultural wonders, like plays, museums, etc. which would help connect real life to learning. I want to help bridge the gaps.

(Debra, May, 2012)

And before we dealt with, I don't know if you went to any of the framework pieces that the literacy coop did, I realized that before the framework that for some of our students to come back it's a big decision and a change in their life. They think about going back to school but they don't think about the resources they are going to need to stay in school, how they will have to fight certain folks, and maybe take them out of their lives until they can get where they are going.

(Karen, May, 2012)

Karen also shared her belief that professional development should help instructors address student perceptions that the GED is their final goal. She stated:

We need a strategy to engage our students. I try to build in my students a pre college, to think in terms of going to the main campus. I'm building college students, not GED students. And that is what the college encourages that we plant

that seed in them that this is only the threshold. You have to build that expectation, that commitment. Because you and I know those who do get a GED, there's not much you can do with a GED, but an associate's degree. So right now we begin to give reading assignments with a quiz after. Why? To guarantee to me that they read the book. To show me that they read the work.

(Karen, May, 2012)

Luke agreed that addressing student perceptions was important, and commented that students' failure to see the GED as education, or as lifelong learning allows them to become easily discouraged.

I just find that for so many students that this is a means to an end. They just get so easily discouraged. This one girl was struggling with decimals and she said, "this is stupid I don't wanna do it." It's not stupid. You're just frustrated that you're having trouble.

(Luke, May, 2012)

Joyce felt that any professional development must focus on the whole student within their real life context to be effective. She added:

We have to think of whatever the preparation is it has to be holistic, so we do have to understand their reality, clothing, shelter and how they survive, mind /body /spirit comes first and then looking at the value of education. And then looking at you know what are some of those elements of psychology of the adult learner according to culture, according to gender, according to region, economics, so on and so forth. So it has to be holistic.

(Joyce, May, 2012)

Edward added his support for professional development that helps instructors see the student perspective, and helps instructors realize that students' priority for education changes based on what is happening in their lives. He expressed a desire to learn how to engage students in spite of those realities, stating:

We need to transform ourselves to look at it from the perspective of our students.

But you're absolutely right those are the things that they that they face, not the fact that Mr. _____ is teaching fractions today, that's secondary in my list of priorities and that's what we need to capture. Sure how do we engage these people, how do we put that sense of values, the true value of education, and that's what I struggle with. Especially when it comes to African American Males, that's the thorn in my side. We're not social workers.

(Edward, May, 2012)

Includes interaction with peers.

Instructors identified interaction with peers as a benefit of past professional development. Predictably, they indicated that professional development should include time to interact and share with peers. Instructors felt that hearing about successful strategies from other instructors who used them was more likely to motivate them to try those strategies. As well, when instructors saw that their colleagues were excited about resources and how well they worked with their students, they were more encouraged to access those resources.

Includes follow-up.

Finally, instructors indicated that professional development should have a follow-up component. Instructors recognized that the level of understanding required to

understand a workshop differs from the level of understanding necessary to implement learning from a workshop or professional development activity. Instructors indicated that follow-up would provide the multiple benefit of allowing professional developers to assess how effective professional development was for the participants, to encourage participants who have not yet attempted to implement a strategy to use it, and would also permit instructors to ask questions, or receive pointers on implementing strategies covered. Alice felt that follow-up increased instructor accountability, providing positive peer pressure for instructors to incorporate new knowledge and skills. Joyce emphasized this when she added:

There should be a method of follow-up to assess the effectiveness and usefulness of the workshop for the instructor. I think for me it is more an issue of the long-term impact. A lot of times I will go to a workshop and I'll learn something and it'll be great, but continuing to use it is where I'll have the most issues with long-term impact.

(Joyce, May, 2012)

When instructors spoke about the professional development model, one thing was very clear; they are interested in learning about the literacy content, they are interested in learning about instructional strategies that are effective with the literacy content and adult learners, and they are interested in learning about the unique needs and challenges of adult literacy students. Instructors believed this information was missing from K-12 certification programs that they have completed. Instructors with backgrounds in adult learning and development believed that this was missing from their formal education. As a group, instructors believed that the elements that they identified as necessary

components of professional development are missing from the majority of the professional development that is currently available for instructors. Professional development designed in concert with instructors and students as the participants recommended would allow for professional development to address the real needs of adult literacy students, and the diverse needs of the literacy instructors themselves.

Summary of Findings

Based on the responses of the total group of thirty-seven participants, adult literacy educators in the study are predominantly an older female population. Instructors reported that they entered the field through indirect paths, finding positions in adult literacy through friends, volunteer opportunities, after periods of unemployment, or after learning about opportunities in adult literacy while working in positions in the K-12 setting. The result of this indirect entry is that instructors do not have formal training to prepare them for the job of teaching five content areas to adult literacy learners. Two-thirds of the instructors have no formal training in education. The instructors who do have formal training in education were trained to work with K-12 students, not adult learners. None of the instructors have formal training in working with students who have learning disabilities, and are therefore not trained to attend to the needs of half to up to 85% of the adult literacy population. Further, only one instructor in the sample indicated that they had any formal training that included a concentration in one of the five subject areas or the GED test. This demonstrates a general lack of formal training in what to teach (content), how to teach, (pedagogy and andragogy), and who we teach (adult learners and adult learners with learning disabilities).

Once instructors obtain positions in adult literacy, they often find that they lack

adequate human and material resources. They are often in positions where there is an absence of educational leadership, and where. In these instances, supervisors do not have a background in education or a strong background in content, and have not had any teaching experiences themselves. Instructors also reported lacking educational materials, receiving no materials, or few materials upon hire. Further, instructors are often at a loss for which materials are appropriate for which students. Instructors described their inability to look at the results of students' standardized assessments and prescribe appropriate instructional materials.

In addition to the lack of formal training, leadership, and facility with selecting level-appropriate materials, instructors find that external factors present additional challenges as they work to educate adult learners. These factors include societal attitudes that create stigma around the GED and prevent literacy programs from receiving the necessary political and financial support for programs to be successful. Program designers', program partners', and program participants' unrealistic expectations for how quickly students can progress impose additional challenges as instructors spend additional time managing expectations. This is a particular challenge for instructors, the majority of whom work part time hours, and have short instructional hours. These instructors are often splitting this time between instruction and orienting new students.

In addition to splitting time between orientation and instruction, instructors find that short instructional hours, the broad range of ability levels in their classes, and the need to cover multiple subject areas make it difficult to help all learners achieve level gains. As well, inconsistent student attendance complicates matters further. Instructors cannot anticipate who will be in front of them from day to day, have difficulty conducting

whole group lessons, and are unable to draw on common classroom experiences to aid instruction.

Although nearly all of the instructors in the study indicated that they teach pre-GED students, instructors focus primarily on reading, mathematics, and writing. Time constraints, lack of comfort with the materials across all five content areas, and instructor beliefs that social studies and science do not require independent instruction were given as the reasons for not focusing on all five content areas. Instructors indicated that they spend twice as much time teaching mathematics as they do on reading and writing, with science and social studies receiving one-sixth as much time as mathematics. Students, then, are not receiving instruction in all of the areas that they must pass to earn the GED credential.

Instructors struggle with not having a depth of content knowledge, believing that not having answers might threaten their credibility as teachers. Instructors have a desire to know the content more fully. The lack of content mastery requires instructors to rely heavily on textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets, the materials instructors indicated they use most for instruction. Instructors experience frustration with feeling unprepared in the classroom. They employ several methods for learning materials, from learning alongside students to studying lessons in preparation for instruction, or seeking out another instructor for help with content. Instructors spend years learning instructional strategies and GED content, drawing on their experiences as students.

Instructors know that their job is important not only in terms of helping students earn the GED credential, but also in helping students pursue continuing education, obtaining and maintaining family sustaining employment opportunities, and improving

students' quality of life in general. Instructors overall have empathy for students who are returning to school, set high expectations for them, and work to help them achieve academically. At the same time, instructors do hold some negative cultural views about the students that they teach.

Instructors do believe they benefitted from past formal education. Those trained in adult learning and development found the adult learning theories and psychology of the adult learner helpful, however instructors expressed their belief that past formal education, even within the field of education was inadequate preparation for instruction of adult literacy learners. Instructors, even with an average of five to ten years of experience teaching in adult literacy, do not feel prepared to use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading and math, to prepare students for careers, and to integrate technology into their instructional approaches. In addition, when eight instructors took a commonly used basic skills test, only four were comfortable enough with the literacy content to be able to complete the entire assessment in the allotted time.

Instructors have low or no professional development requirements, however instructors do engage in professional development, and shared experiences of really benefitting from professional development activities. Instructors also indicated that there is an inconsistency in the quality of available offerings, and shared experiences of wanting to leave workshops that were not good, but having to stay until the end to get their certificates as proof that they attended.. Instructors are able to access professional development in a variety of delivery formats. These include webinars, workshops, and conferences. Their top priority for accessing professional development was adding to their knowledge about teaching adults.

Instructors indicated that professional development does fill in the gap between formal education and the knowledge and skills needed to be effective in adult literacy, but that they also draw from general education and past life experiences when executing lessons. Instructors draw from previous professional development received outside of adult literacy, such as from military or pastoral training, and bring resources from a variety of personal experiences into the adult literacy classroom, such as their experiences as students and experiences as teachers.

Professional development helps instructors learn about new resources, understand the adult literacy learner population better, and helped them to pick up some instructional approaches. For example, instructors learned to: 1) use “effective methods from past experiences to create memorable learning experiences, for example using rhythm, music, humor,” 2) “get students to interact and help each other reach their goals,” and 3) learn to use materials outside of the GED book.” Still instructors in the study indicated that their predominant tools of instruction are textbooks, workbooks, and worksheets, which do not promote or require the use of these strategies.

Instructors appreciate professional development activities where they learned practical skills that could be implemented immediately, with one instructor speaking specifically about the LD professional development offered through the State. Monica stated, “the practical stuff that I learned was just phenomenal. It was real, hands-on kind of practical things that I use in my classes all of the time. I have been able to modify things.” Professional development that lacks the sharing of practical skills that can be easily implemented does not impact instructional practice. One instructor stated, “a lot of times I get a folder and it goes right in a box.” This provides support for professional

development models that are situated within the learning context, and that provide follow-up with instructors beyond the professional development session.

Instructors shared how they have benefitted from the professional development offered through the Literacy Cooperative of Greater Cleveland, however, due to budget and time constraints, and the goals of the Literacy Cooperative, those workshops do not include many of the features necessary to help instructors implement learning from professional development activities. For example, although the workshops are designed to provide content knowledge and instructional strategies in an environment where instructional approaches are modeled, and where participants are encouraged to work collaboratively to modify strategies for their specific learning context, each workshop in the series is essentially a one-shot workshop, with no follow-up component.

In the last year, instructors received professional development on instructional strategies for teaching reading, writing, and mathematics, and strategies for integrating technology into the classroom. Instructors found independent professional reading and workshops to be the most useful forms of professional development. Instructors also learn about resources through professional development and through the opportunities to network with other instructors that attending professional development activities provide. Instructors also draw from professional development received outside of adult literacy education. Instructors currently receive stipends or reimbursement for professional development, release time from work, or professional development offered during paid time. Instructors were most interested in receiving grants to support special professional development projects.

Despite their participation in professional development, instructors indicated that

they feel poorly qualified to teach science, and need additional training in instructional strategies to prepare students for the new analytical writing piece on the new GED test. Instructors also wanted ideas for incorporating experiments into science education. Instructors want additional training in motivating learners to read, recognizing reading disabilities, and learning which models of reading instruction are effective with adult learners. For the writing content area, instructors want additional training in helping students overcome their fear of writing, incorporating technology and workplace writing, and integrating reading and writing approaches. Instructors were most interested in receiving additional training in helping students develop problem-solving skills in the mathematics content area. Instructors also noted that there is a need for professional development designed to improve their computer literacy skills, and provide them with strategies for building computer literacy in students.

Instructors would like future professional development to focus on building their content knowledge, and providing instructional models specific to each content area. In addition, instructors felt that when they leave professional development activities, they should be able to implement some of the practices immediately. Instructors felt the strategies taught should be practical, and applicable, and that instructors should leave professional development with the tools and materials necessary to implement learning. Instructors also felt that including adult learning and development theories, and training on learning styles, and the barriers that students face would help them develop a better understanding of the students. Along with this, instructors indicated that they would also like ideas for how to apply the theories, address the barriers, and use the theories and learning styles to inform their instruction. Learning to use data to inform instruction was

another area where instructors indicated they could use professional development. This professional development should be grounded in research, provide instructors with resources, promote reflection, and be planned and developed with the aid of instructors and students. Professional development experiences should also include opportunities for interaction with peers, and follow-up after the professional development.

Operationalization of “Adequate”

Research question four refers to the “adequate preparation” of adult literacy instructors. From the researcher’s perspective, and based on best practice research, adequate preparation in adult literacy education would include knowledge of content in the content areas that instructors are responsible for teaching, knowledge of strategies to identify and assist learners with learning disabilities, and knowledge of instructional strategies that target global and analytic learners. For the purpose of this study, instructors were asked to determine what constituted adequate preparation. The research revealed the multiple realities of what adequate preparation means for practitioners, and how those meanings are formed by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which instructors practice. For example, instructors certainly don’t see themselves as having inadequate preparation. During the focus group activity, when speaking about their indirect entry into the field, two instructors were initially defensive when we talked about how instructors did not receive formal training given that adult literacy was not their chosen field. When instructors reflected upon their own education, they remembered nostalgically how they were drilled in the basics, and received a strong educational foundation. They even made observations that among the adult literacy population they see similar patterns of preparation with older students (over 30) having a foundation in

the basics, noting that it is the younger generation that seems to be lacking in basic skills. Their solid educational foundation when viewed from a historical context constituted adequate preparation. Similarly, within how programs are currently structured and supervised, instructors' prior preparation and training are considered adequate for adult literacy instruction. In light of the basic skills test experience, and in light of instructors' perceptions of their level of preparedness with teaching the GED content areas to students with learning disabilities, instructors did eventually begin to share that current levels of preparation are not adequate.

Two instructors, Monica and Richard, provided written descriptions of what they believe would be "adequate preparation."

Adequate Prep for Adult Educators---- Here goes: A min of 2 yrs teaching adults, a Bachelor's degree, and professional development in the guidelines and laws of education. Teachers should be solid in English, Math, Science, and Reading skills. They should be proficient in computer skills for Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. They should take and pass the OGT or state tests for high school and the college entrance exams. There should be a 2 yr. degree program for adult educators as well. We need to know how to spot a learning disability and better ways to fix the folks. We should be a tutor before becoming an instructor at least 2 months. The experience and class settings can be like an apprenticeship. Nothing better than a little hands-on before getting right into the classrooms.

(Richard, May, 2012)

In my opinion, beginning literacy teachers should have a Bachelor's Degree.

Having attained that level of education demonstrates an ability to think critically

and (hopefully) creatively. Those thinking skills are more necessary than "content knowledge," which can be gained through research, PD, or life experience. I think it's a bad idea to have teachers "specialize" and teach only math or English or whatever, yet we expect our students to learn and master everything. Example: I have a B.A. in English, but I love teaching math. Once I realized I didn't have to know everything there is to know about math, I began to use my brain to approach problems, and I sought the expertise of others. Never once in my life did I think I would ever LIKE math, let alone LOVE teaching it. I think LD preparation is very important. Practical application of LD methods is also very important because I believe those methods apply to everyone in the classroom.

I also agree that instructors need an understanding of adult learning and development, along with an understanding of the barriers adults face when considering returning to school. We also need an accurate understanding of why these students left school in the first place. I say "accurate", because I think it does these students a disservice to call them "dropouts." So, perhaps we need some background knowledge [sic] of their former educational systems.

(Monica, May, 2012)

It was very interesting to read their descriptions, because based on what I knew about the participants, and about myself, none of us would be able to say that we had adequate preparation. Reflecting on Richard's beliefs that instructors should take and pass OGTs and college entrance exams to demonstrate adequacy, I certainly believe that the average adult would not be adequate without instruction specific to the content areas, either as the

focus of baccalaureate study, or through post baccalaureate work. A bachelor's degree without that concentration is simply not adequate.

As noted in the literature review, improving the approach to professional development to include content and pedagogical knowledge delivered through embedded professional development could help instructors develop the competencies which were identified as being essential to effective instruction (Smith, 2006). These competencies include good basic skills, content knowledge, and the ability to differentiate instruction based on the needs of the learner. Based on data from study participants, current policies for hiring teachers in adult literacy and the reliance on professional development that typically takes the form of participation in regional or state conferences or one-shot workshops do not provide adult literacy educators with those competencies. The next section of this work will discuss implications for policymakers, recommendations for other stakeholders, and recommendations for future research in adult literacy.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Statement of the Problem

Adult literacy educators enter into teaching positions where they are entrusted with the education of adult learners, often without any prior preparation, and with very little guidance on how to actually teach the learners in their classes. The formal educational training of many adult literacy educators is not in education, adult literacy, or in the content areas that these instructors are expected to teach. As such, instructors may lack the competencies identified as being critical for effective instruction (Smith, 2006). In the absence of formal training, professional development is the only formal process in place to help instructors acquire knowledge for professional practice (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). For these reasons, there is concern nationally and internationally about the quality of educators in adult literacy due to their lack of teacher qualifications and due to their lack of formal education in the five adult literacy content areas: 1) reading, 2) writing, 3) mathematics, 4) science, and 5) social studies) (Lucas et al., 2005).

Much of the knowledge in the field of adult literacy is based on findings from research conducted in the K-12 setting (Comings & Soricone, 2007). The need exists for

more data about the background, needs, and formal education of adult literacy practitioners to better inform professional development planning (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). While there are studies documenting the lived experiences of students in adult literacy, electronic journal searches yielded only one study describing the experiences of the adult literacy educators themselves. These circumstances underscore the need for additional research on professional development of adult literacy professionals, particularly from the perspective of these professionals.

Purpose of the Study

To determine the professional development needs of adult literacy educators, the field must first gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges of adult literacy educators. That understanding must be obtained by collecting information from the experts on the teachers' experiences, the teachers themselves. The teachers as a group can provide descriptions of the difficulties encountered within the literacy classroom, the knowledge and skills that they need to feel competent at their jobs, and the types of professional development experiences that will impact instructional practice. The teachers are best positioned to determine what teachers need, and best able to forecast how teachers themselves might be impacted by changes in preparation and professional development policies and practices. The aim of this work was to provide that perspective, generating knowledge on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy with the assistance of current practitioners in the field.

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of how adult literacy educators enter into the field of adult literacy education; how they make meaning of, or

provide the essence of their experiences of preparation, professional development, and their practice of literacy instruction; and to engage them in a conversation toward recommending a more effective model of teacher preparation and professional development based on a critical analysis of the literature, study data, and analysis of their experiences in the field.

Research Questions

The four research questions that follow guided this inquiry:

- 1) What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?
- 2) What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 3) What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?
- 4) What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for literacy instruction?

Significance of the Study

This study of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy examines the efficacy of current hiring and professional development practices from the perspective of current adult literacy educators. This study introduces the voice of these educators into the body of literature on teacher preparation and professional development, providing unique insight through their descriptions of their experiences finding positions in adult literacy, entering the field, beginning instructing, and accessing professional

development. Findings provide implications for policies related to the hiring, orientation, and professional development of adult literacy instructors, and the administrators who supervise them. Findings also suggest recommendations for other stakeholders, such as assisting administrators in creating a continuing professional education program that is responsive to the needs of instructors, and equips instructors with the necessary competencies for adult literacy instruction. Further, findings from the study suggest future studies, an evaluation of the current professional development that is available, and provide a rationale for evaluating the immediate and longitudinal worth of the continuing professional education that adult literacy educators receive.

Theoretical Framework

Since the goal of the study was to gain an understanding of the world in which adult literacy instructors work, and to move them toward imagining a model for teacher preparation and professional development, the research was positioned within the social constructivist stance, as well as the advocacy/participatory worldview. Participating in the research provided instructors with an opportunity to describe their lived experiences as literacy instructors, to examine current preparation and professional development practices, and to make recommendations for what knowledge and skills are necessary to be adequately prepared as instructors. Analyzing the data alongside practitioners, and working together to identify emergent themes provided an opportunity for the researcher to identify those experiences that emerged repeatedly from the participant data as common to adult literacy educators' experiences. The opportunity to present those themes back to the participants, and to another group of instructors via individual interviews, allowed for the validation of themes. The research revealed the multiple

realities of what adequate preparation means for practitioners, and how those meanings are formed by the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which instructors practice. These multiple realities and contextual impacts are described in greater detail in the discussion that follows.

Critical theory and participatory action research.

Critical theory is a form of knowledge production that challenges traditional theories and the social, historical, and ideological structures that create them, with the intent of emancipating human beings from the structures that constrain them (Bowman, 2012) “Participatory action research represents a stance within qualitative research methods that assumes knowledge is rooted in social relations and most powerful when produced collaboratively through action.” The rationale for using critical theory and PAR in this study was to work collaboratively with a group of instructors who know better than anyone the realities of working in the field, and to challenge instructors to examine the current structures of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy, to examine them in light of their performance on the basic skills test and their experiences teaching in the field, and to provide the field with a genuine understanding and evaluation of the impact that current structures bear on individual instructors, as well as the learners themselves. The idea was that the experience itself could be emancipatory, by providing agency and voice to instructors. The opportunity to present the field with evidence to suggest that not only do current policies and practices fail to reflect what is supported in the best practice research, but that also fail to promote the development of high quality teachers in the field would also be emancipatory.

The participatory action worldview allowed for the critical examination of

teachers' current levels of preparation, their current professional delivery system, and their perceived ability to meet the academic needs of their students. This worldview embraces an emancipatory pedagogy that helped participants to see the oppressive political structures that influence their experiences and motivated them to disrupt the status quo (Merriam et al, 2007). Instructors identified societal biases, negative stereotypes about the kinds of students who access our services, assumptions about students' disengagement with voting, and a political climate that does not believe in providing second chances to students who "squandered their first chance" at a free, public education as the oppressive influences and political structures that influence their experiences. They concluded that these forces would only allow them to enter into a field unprepared and then fail to provide the necessary professional development to help them become more prepared because their perceptions of the students who access these programs (drop outs, immigrants, teen moms) are that they are not worth the investment, or are at least not a priority. Instructors viewed current practices of preparation and professional development as the status quo. Through their inquiry they challenged the status quo, which suggests that teachers can come from any background and be prepared to assist adult literacy learners in achieving their literacy goals. Findings from the study suggest that this is not, in fact, adequate preparation.

Literature

It is estimated that 51 million American adults have sufficient difficulty in reading or computation to be challenged by the ordinary tasks of everyday life and work (Guy, 2005, p2). During the focus group activity where participants discussed the effects of low literacy, study participants supported this finding in the research. Participants noted

that this sometimes manifests itself in students' inability to advocate for themselves, often due to their inability to understand certain terms, and their unwillingness to let others know when they don't fully understand something. There are consequences to having low literacy skills, and those consequences negatively impact individuals, families, and communities; this can also result in widespread economic impacts (Askov, 2007).

Low literacy skills make it difficult to supply industry with a skilled workforce, threatening personal, local, regional and national economies. Study participants also found that their experiences supported this finding. They experienced students who had difficulty obtaining employment, and noted lack of computer literacy as a potential barrier to students' ability to obtain employment with companies whose application processes must be accessed via the Internet. Instructors also spoke of participants who had maintained long-term employment, but whose continued employment was threatened due to their lack of a secondary education credential. Citizens with low literacy skills have a greater likelihood of experiencing negative social and economic consequences such as higher unemployment, and underemployment rates, lower paying jobs, lower household incomes, poverty, and dependence on public assistance, and have a limited ability to fully experience citizenship, and function in society (Askov, 2007; Kantner, 2008; Mellard & Patterson, 2008; Subban, 2007). Engaging with the adult literacy system can result in improved employment opportunities, increased community involvement, and can positively impact children's education (Comings & Soricone, 2007).

To improve the literacy levels and social and economic outcomes of adult literacy

learners, adult educators must be effective in their practice. Adult learning and development theories, research on adult learners with disabilities, research on reading and numeracy instruction, and the research on the relationship between teacher quality and student achievement all underscore the need for instructors who are educated in the adult literacy content areas, as well as instructors who are educated in working with the adult literacy population, and in accommodating their unique needs. These bodies of research emphasize the need for adult literacy educators to receive focused, sustained professional development that models instructional strategies that are effective with adult learners. Focus Group participants stressed the need for professional development focused on instructional models, noting the need for instructional approaches that are appropriate and specific to each content area. This is particularly important for those instructors who are working with students with learning disabilities, who experience the negative social and economic consequences associated with low literacy levels (e.g. unemployment and poverty) at higher levels than adult education students without SLD (NCSALL, 2002; Mellard & Patterson, 2008).

Without a certification requirement for hire, professional development is the main vehicle for improving teachers' knowledge and skills in adult literacy education. In-service trainings, workshops, offered as single-session workshops or conferences are the primary method of professional development for many adult literacy educators, and this was validated by study participants who indicated that workshops and in-service are the dominant forms of professional development. Unfortunately, research has found these methods to be ineffective in impacting instructional practice, and study participants found that to be consistent with their experiences (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). The Secretary of

Education of the United States Department of Education noted that providing highly qualified teachers can only happen if our state policies on teacher preparation and certification change dramatically (USDOE, 2002).

In K-12 education teachers must demonstrate competency in the content areas they are teaching either by passing standardized content area tests, or by having a degree or certification in that content area (USDOE, 2002). In the field of adult literacy education, this is not the case. Further, there is little or no preparatory training that takes place, and therefore the CPE that is available provides foundational information to practicing professionals. Instructors in the study confirmed that those who are working within the State-funded system are only required to attend one or two professional development activities per academic year, and instructors that are not a part of that system may have no professional development requirements at all (ODE, 2009; Smith, 2006). Quality CPE is critical for adult literacy educators to provide the quality of education they want to deliver, however, structural barriers in the field of adult education including low budgets, an overreliance on part-time staff, and the tendency to hire teachers based on willingness versus on credentials makes it difficult to change how adult literacy educators are prepared for instructional practice (Smith, 2006; Smith & Hofer, 2003).

Professional development must help teachers develop factual knowledge, and procedural knowledge, and allow opportunities for practice so teachers can master how and when to use educational strategies (Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Instructors in the study identified this as a shortcoming of the professional development that is currently available to them; they lack opportunities to practice the implementation of strategies

learned in professional development, and are often at a loss for how and when to use strategies. A model of CPE for adult literacy must bring instructors to a level of professional competence as it relates to their mastery of content and their ability to apply instructional strategies to help their students reach a level of content mastery in pursuit of educational goals. To determine the professional development needs of adult literacy educators, the field must first gain an understanding of the experiences and challenges of adult literacy educators. The aim of this work was to provide that perspective, generating knowledge on teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy with the assistance of current practitioners in the field.

Methodology

Using an approach informed by phenomenology, this mixed methods study examined teacher preparation and professional development through the use of survey research combined with participatory action methodology. Seventeen instructors from within the State-funded ABLE program completed the surveys, and eight instructors who participated in a focus group activity also completed the surveys; three of these instructors were ABLE instructors. The surveys provided demographic data, and also provided a broader view of the experiences of adult literacy educators. The participatory action research (PAR) methodology, investigated the lived experiences of adult literacy educators, as told by current adult literacy educators who participated in focus group experiences and interviews. PAR methodology transformed the inquiry process to a collaborative endeavor that invited participants as co-researchers in the study, and privileged their knowledge, elevating them as a result of that knowledge to co researchers in the production of new knowledge (Guishard, Fine, and Dowly, 2005; Miller

&Maguire, 2009).

The study provided an understanding of adult literacy educators' experiences from practicing instructors who described the essence of what instructors experience upon entry into the field, while engaging the professional development system, and while teaching in the adult literacy classroom. The investigation provided insight into what instructors themselves identified as adequate preparation, and the appropriateness of current models of teacher preparation and professional development in providing that preparation. Using a combination of qualitative, quantitative, and PAR methodologies enabled the researcher and co-researchers to identify themes that emerged from the accounts of current adult literacy instructors.

Data were collected from surveys, a basic skills test, a research question round robin, and a series of interviews. Survey data were analyzed first, providing summaries of instructors' experiences entering the field, teaching adult literacy, and accessing professional development. Next, the data from open-ended survey questions were analyzed to identify significant statements in participant comments. These significant statements were grouped into an initial set of themes. Then Focus Group participants completed the basic skills tests, which measured instructor performance on assessments of reading and mathematics. CTB McGraw Hill scored the assessments, and median scores, the range of scores, and grade level equivalents were collected. Next, Focus Group participants participated in the research question round robin, discussing the research questions for the study in pairs. The entire Focus Group was reconvened, and worked to identify common themes relevant to each research question. Participants learned of the theme categories from the surveys, and the results of the basic skills test,

and had additional time to react and respond to those data. The researcher transcribed and analyzed the Focus Group sessions, working first to identify significant statements, and then grouping those significant statements into themes. These themes were presented back to Focus Group members for member checking. Interview participants were then interviewed and were also presented with the table of themes that were generated from the survey and Focus Group activity for member checking. These themes can provide insight to policymakers and planners of continuing professional development to ensure that instructors' voices are present during the professional development planning process, and to ensure that their experiences and needs are reflected in future professional development policies and activities.

The current body of research does not include any studies of the actual experiences of adult literacy instructors. There is currently no knowledge of obstacles that they face as new instructors, uncertainties they may have about the content they are teaching, what strategies they currently use to overcome those obstacles or even what coping strategies they may use to conceal what shortcomings exist in their preparation.

Limitations and Delimitations

Although English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) also falls within the scope of the state-funded program, the study was limited to adult literacy instructors mainly because the additional needs for language instruction of adult learners, particularly those that are not literate in their first language, could be the subject of an extensive study on its own. Due to the four-hour time commitment required for the PAR portion of the study, those participants were instructors who were willing due to a pre-existing relationship with the researcher established through past professional

development and networking.

The sample for the qualitative portion of the study involved twenty instructors from urban sites in Northeast Ohio. The study provides information on their experiences but does not suggest related impacts on student achievement since student achievement data were not made available. As the findings are limited to the experiences in the state being studied, and participants self-selected rather than randomly selected, the study sample is not representative of the population of adult literacy instructors. Therefore study results are not generalizable to conditions in other states.

The researcher purposefully omitted any definitions of what it means to be effective as an instructor, or what would be considered adequate preparation so as not to bias the definitions that participants in the action research component created. The intention behind this omission was to ensure that definitions of effectiveness and adequacy are authentically those of the co-researchers.

Data Analysis

Study data came from three groups (Survey Only, Focus Group, and Interview Only group) and four data sources (survey, basic skills test, focus group activity, and interviews). The thirty-seven participants in the study represented instructors both within (N=24) and outside (N=13) of the WIA-funded ABLE system. The instructors, who were mostly female, averaged 52 years of age. The instructors in the study entered into adult literacy through indirect paths, meaning that while they had experience in education, or experience working with adults, the majority of the instructors in the study did not have formal training in education, formal training in working with the adult literacy population, or formal training in the five content areas that instructors are

expected to teach in the adult literacy context. Eighty-six percent of the participants were employed part-time in adult literacy with instructor assignments ranging from four to forty-six hours per week.

Upon entry into the field, many instructors found themselves in positions where they lacked the human and material resources needed for instruction. Instructors who did have materials found that they lacked guidance in selecting which materials are appropriate for students at different literacy levels. Instructors also found external factors, such as societal stigmas, policies, program structures, and the students themselves presented challenges to their professional practice. Instructors found themselves teaching classes with students at multiple ability levels, who demonstrated inconsistent attendance, further complicating the instructional process. Instructors indicated a need for professional development to help them manage these challenges. Instructors indicated that they teach students who have the goal of earning the GED credential, yet most instructors indicated that they do not teach all of the content areas that students will encounter on the GED test. Most instructors stated that they spent the bulk of their instructional time on mathematics, reading, and writing, with instructors spending twice as much time on mathematics as on reading and writing. Social studies and science received one-sixth of the instructional time as was devoted to mathematics instruction. Instructors typically use textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, and authentic materials as their instructional tools for the content areas that they do teach. The textbooks to which instructors referred are the GED books that students can access to review for the GED test, and are not designed to be instructional tools. Few instructors incorporated technology into instruction, and those that did relied on programmed

instructional materials.

Instructors spoke of their lack of comfort with the content. This often translated into feelings of being unprepared. Instructors spoke of studying to stay ahead of their students' needs, or learning content alongside students as they read directions for how to approach problems or answer questions together. Some instructors felt that not knowing the content could threaten credibility with students. Other instructors believed that it helped students to know that instructors do not always have all of the answers.

Half of the Survey Only and Focus Group participants shared that their formal education has aided them in selecting curricula, materials, and instructional strategies. There was a consensus among Focus Group members that past formal education is not sufficient for content area mastery and instruction. The three instructors who had backgrounds in adult education indicated that they felt they have a better understanding of the psychology of the adult learner, and a better understanding of adult development as a result of that education. These programs are not designed to equip instructors for teaching five content areas to adult literacy learners. Instructors with experience in the K-12 setting indicated that learning about teaching methods as part of their formal education was helpful in preparing them for instruction within adult literacy, but that this education did not prepare them for working with adult literacy learners. Instructors in the study felt that the preparation that they received was not adequate preparation for teaching adult literacy students.

Instructors indicated that they don't feel prepared to use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading and mathematics even though they indicated that the content of their professional development centered largely on instructional strategies for

teaching reading, writing, and mathematics effectively. With 66% of the Survey Only Group having over ten years of experience, and with 62.5% of the Focus Group members having more than six years of experience, their feelings of being unprepared for instruction will likely remain unchanged unless there is an overhaul in the nature of the professional development that they receive. In addition, when a basic skills test was administered to Focus Group members, only half were able to complete the entire test in the allotted time, indicating a lack of facility with the basic skills content. This also suggests that while instructors felt that both past formal education and professional development may have been helpful, they clearly do not provide instructors with all of the knowledge that they need to be familiar with the literacy content. Therefore, based on the K-12 literature linking content knowledge to teacher quality, we can conclude that past formal education and professional development in adult literacy may not lead to stronger teacher competency. AIR, 2006; Lucas et al.; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Lucas et al.; 2005; USDOE, 2002).

Instructors have no, or minimal requirements for professional development, but did indicate that they have accessed professional development through a variety of delivery formats. The majority of the professional development that has been available has been delivered in formats that research has shown to be ineffective in impacting teachers' instructional practices (Smith, 2006; Smith & Gillespie, 2007). Only half of study participants indicated that past professional development has been useful in helping them make instructional decisions, with independent professional reading and workshops being the most useful forms of professional development. Instructors found that professional development did help supplement formal education, and provided them with

opportunities to network with other instructors and learn from one another. Instructors learned about new resources and new instructional approaches from these professional development activities, and also gained new insights on the adult literacy population. Instructors liked professional development that provided them with materials and approaches that they could put to use immediately.

Given their experiences of entering adult literacy without any certification for teaching adult literacy learners, and finding formal education and current professional development ineffective in equipping them for the task of teaching adult literacy learners, instructors provided their own suggestions for professional development. Instructors felt that an undergraduate program or post baccalaureate certification program would be a way to provide a credential for adult literacy educators. The first thing instructors felt should be a part of such a program was instruction in the content areas to improve their mastery of the content. Instructors indicated that science content proved especially challenging, but shared their belief that direct instruction in all five content areas is needed. Specifically, instructors indicated that they wanted additional training in helping students overcome their fear of writing, integrating writing and reading approaches, integrating technology into writing instruction, teaching workplace writing, motivating learners to read and recognizing reading disabilities and models of instruction that would be helpful when teaching adults. In the area of mathematics instructors wanted additional training in helping learners develop problem solving skills, and using technology for instruction.

Instructors stated that professional development should include instructional models that help instructors with how to present the content. This professional

development should be based on current research, and have immediate practical application. Professional development should help instructors learn about the students; learning styles, learning and development theories, and the barriers that threaten their educational pursuits would be some topics to include. Instructors also felt that professional development should teach them ways to manage and use student data to inform instruction. Professional development should point instructors to useful resources, and allow for interaction with peers. Instructors felt that for professional development to be really useful, it should be developed in concert with teachers and students, and include follow-up.

To significantly improve the knowledge and skill levels of teachers in adult literacy, sweeping policy changes, and changes in current hiring, employment, and professional development processes will be necessary. The external factors that instructors in the study shared, from part time hours, to short instructional hours, to lack of prep time are all related to how positions are structured within adult literacy. These changes must be addressed along with changes to professional development to significantly impact the extent to which instructors improve as a result of professional development, particularly since the impact of professional development is affected by the lack of prep time (Smith, 2010).

Implications

Funding for professional development.

Instructors in the study indicated that even though some of them do not have professional development requirements, or have very low professional development requirements, they do actively seek and access professional development. This

demonstrates that instructors do want to participate in professional development, and do want to increase their knowledge and skills to improve their professional practice. At the same time, instructors indicated that even after years of teaching and accessing professional development, they are still not very comfortable with the content that they are teaching, are still looking for approaches to teaching the literacy content to adult literacy learners, and they still feel unprepared as instructors. This would indicate that current professional development practices are not helping instructors to become more prepared to deliver literacy instruction. The implication for policymakers then, would be to revisit the type, intensity, and quality of professional development that instructors receive.

With the literature indicating the ineffectiveness of the predominant models of professional development available in adult literacy and a need for more sustained professional development, including increased contact hours for professional development, a departure from current professional development funding practices is in order. To provide increased contact hours for instructors would require a reallocation of professional development resources. As a beginning step, policymakers could require that states reserve a percentage of their professional development budgets specifically for research-based professional development. Policymakers could determine a standard for what counts as research-based professional development, and require that states seek out professional developers who are able to demonstrate how their professional development offerings and approaches integrate features that research has shown to be effective for professional development. Policymakers could require that decisions to fund learning activities from the portion of the budget reserved for research-based professional

development must consider the extent to which professional developers include research-based features.

In 2007 the State of Ohio, which is required to provide professional development for the staff of state-funded programs, provided approximately 2.1 million dollars to support the training of ABLE personnel (ODE, 2009). The state requires staff working seven (7) hours or more per week to participate in two activities per academic year. Staff members who work fewer than seven (7) hours per week are required to attend one activity per academic year. In fiscal year 2011, the state used 112 full-time and 754 part-time teachers to serve the 46,042 students who accessed literacy services at the 730 sites operated throughout Ohio (Ohio Department of Education, 2011). Using just a quarter of the 2007 allocation for professional development, and dividing that by the 866 teachers currently employed by the state would allow for nearly \$600 per teacher for professional development. States then have the funding for professional development, but need to look at how they are currently allocating that funding, and redirecting it toward professional development that is sustained, job-embedded, and research-based.

Hiring and professional development policies.

I felt totally unprepared as a new teacher. I had no idea what I was doing. I definitely learned the content through studying and through the students (Jessica, May, 2012).

Instructors indicated that they felt unprepared, even after five to ten years of experience in the adult literacy classroom, in terms of knowing how to deliver instruction in a way that meets the needs of the students that they serve. Instructors also said that they felt unprepared in terms of knowing the population of students that they teach,

particularly those students who may be struggling with learning disabilities. Instructors shared that there is also a need to be more prepared in terms of having a real understanding of the content that they are teaching. Instructors with one year, and over ten years of experience spoke of not having a repertoire of instructional strategies for teaching the literacy content, indicating that this lack of preparation is common among novice and veteran instructors alike. Instructors felt this was related to not having prior preparation and training in teaching adult literacy learners.

One implication for policy would be to revisit requirements for hiring adult literacy instructors. Volunteer tutor training programs require that tutors receive training before they begin tutoring. Policymakers in adult literacy could institute a similar policy. This policy could require instructors to have training prior to entering the literacy classroom. Policymakers could also require that instructors conduct observations of two or three literacy instructors before they begin teaching so that their first day of teaching is not their first day inside of a literacy classroom.

A second implication for policy would be to institute a mandatory post hire certification or intensive training requirement for instructors who desire to remain in the field. This policy would require that instructors receive a credential based on targeted education on how to educate adult literacy students, and targeted, sequential education on the content knowledge that instructors are expected to pass on to students, within the first two to three years of instruction as a post hire requirement. This policy would also have to apply retroactively to current instructors who wish to remain in the field to ensure that the entire field of instructors has an educational foundation in educating adult literacy learners. Instructors who are currently employed by programs that require the to seek

certification or alternate certification in K-12 could apply those same resources toward courses that provide more useful knowledge and skills for adult literacy educators.

This certification program could complement the current professional development that states make available for staff. Once instructors have a foundation in the education of adult literacy students obtained through the certification program, and once instructors have a firm grasp of the content, then professional development could decrease in intensity. At that point, current professional development requirements of one or two activities per year could be the requirement for maintaining that credential. This means that states would not have to abandon current professional development practices, but would adapt it to ensure that instructors begin with a firm background in educating adult literacy learners.

Learning disability training requirement.

As noted in the literature review, estimates indicate that 85% of adult literacy students have learning disabilities; this suggests that instructors need to be educated about learning disabilities in the adult literacy population (National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center, Summer 1995; NCSALL, 2002; Smith, 2006). Instructors need to learn strategies for identifying learning difficulties in students. Instructors also need to learn instructional strategies that are effective for helping students with learning disabilities. With the large numbers of students who could potentially have learning disabilities in adult literacy, policies should require that LD training be obtained within the first year as an adult literacy instructor. Adult literacy educators must receive focused, sustained professional development that models instructional strategies that are effective with adult learners, particularly those with learning disabilities, including

developing learner profiles that are unique to student learning needs (Taymans & Corley, 2001). Instructors need opportunities to practice implementing strategies, and to address challenges that arise during implementation. This training should help instructors become familiar with disability law, and the accommodations that are available for students with documented disabilities. This training should also help instructors understand how to interpret and use a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP). This training should help instructors identify learning challenges in students, and provide instructors with information on which instructional approaches might work best, versus allowing them to use trial and error to determine what works for specific students.

Require direct instruction in reading instruction.

Teaching reading is a challenging and complex activity under the best circumstances. Knowledge of adult learner characteristics and classroom management skills alone are not likely sufficient to teach reading and related literacy skills to adult nonreaders. As noted in the literature review, even among certified teachers, only those who have certification in elementary education are likely to have had specific coursework in reading instruction (Smith, 2006, p.171). Adult literacy programs serve students with a broad range of reading abilities. Policies in the field should require direct instruction in strategies for teaching reading to adult learners.

Adult literacy students will need strong reading skills to be successful on the GED test, on college entry exams, in future college classes, and in the workplace. Therefore, adult literacy programs must have the goal of remediating reading problems in students, and producing strong readers. Study participants indicated a desire to be able to identify reading problems in students. An implication for policy would be to require that

instructors receive direct instruction on all components of reading within their first few years of professional practice. This professional development should take an “AIM” approach that provides instructors with the skills and tools necessary to do conduct assessment (A), intervention (I), and monitoring (M) of all five components of student reading, if necessary. An additional policy might require that programs that do not have the resource to assist the lowest level readers articulate with programs that provide one-on-one assistance in reading for students who have very low reading levels.

Recommendations for Other Stakeholders

Study findings demonstrated instructors’ beliefs that current models of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy do not fully equip them for adult literacy instruction. The next step would be to suggest recommendations to address this challenge. The following recommendations acknowledge the influence that funding has over program practices, and reflect contributions that funders can make to improve instructional practice. Study findings also alluded to program practices that create challenges for instructors. Some of the recommendations that follow are directed toward program designers. Finally, there are recommendations for how professional developers can work to improve the quality of professional development that is available in adult literacy.

Recommendations for funders.

As noted in the literature review, few programs in the adult literacy education system, are housed in agencies whose singular focus is the education of adult literacy students, and therefore few programs have the benefit of leadership that fully understands and is committed to adult education and literacy (Guy, 2005). Since adult literacy

programs are often housed in community agencies, the administrators who supervise those programs often lack backgrounds in adult literacy education, and therefore lack understanding of what is necessary to support adult literacy educators and their students. As study participants noted, where there are program supervisors, those supervisors are often ill equipped to provide educational leadership, and are often unaware of the demands placed on instructors, or the complexity of the task of teaching adult literacy learners. In addition, adult literacy educators, particularly new staff members, are not always aware of needs themselves. Instructors who are aware of needs may lack the influence to persuade administrators to meet the needs of which they are aware. Funders, however, hold a great deal of power and influence over programs, and can use that influence to draw programs to higher standards of operation. Funders who are interested in impacting literacy levels need a better understanding of the research-based practices that exist for our field. They also need a better understanding of the needs of adult literacy students, the needs of adult literacy programs, the real needs of adult literacy educators, and the challenges that they face when working with students. With this understanding, at the very least, funders can adjust funding requirements to remove barriers to effective instructional practice. In addition, when funders understand the needs of the field, funding initiatives can be designed to really impact the education of adult literacy students, by pushing programs to incorporate those best practices, holding them accountable for sustaining those practices, and providing dollars for materials, training, and technical assistance to program staff.

Recommendations for program designers.

Smaller pool of more qualified candidates.

Eighty-six percent of the instructors in the study were employed part-time in the field. A recommendation for practice might be that program designers move toward using a smaller pool of more qualified instructors to meet learner needs, and then employ those instructors full-time, providing paid preparation time similar to that provided in K-12 settings. This would allow instructors to work a forty-hour week and have 25% of their time to plan lessons. The remaining 75% of their time could be divided into three, ten-hour blocks where they instruct three separate levels of classes (ABE, Pre-GED, and GED Prep). Students who are pre-GED would be taught with other pre-GED students, and so on, and instructors would not have to divide their time between such a broad range of student abilities within one class. This would allow instructors greater flexibility in instructional delivery formats, meaning that they could conduct whole group, small group, pair work, and individual instruction without feeling like they are leaving half of the class behind.

Students could be assessed, and then placed in classes that are appropriate for their level, possibly even placing students in different levels for math than for the other four content areas. Ten-hour blocks would provide time for instructors to cover all five content areas with each level of students at a pace, and with materials, that are appropriate for the learners within each level. This would require a departure from how students are currently placed and how programs are currently structured, but would allow students to learn at a pace and level more appropriate for their current level. In addition, since research has demonstrated that it takes adult literacy learners between 100 and 150

hours of instructional time to achieve a gain of one grade level on standardized assessments, having ten contact hours available for students could potentially increase the rate at which students achieve literacy gains (Comings, 2007). This structure could still allow for the flexibility in scheduling that adult learners need, so learners whose work schedules permit them to attend only two days per week can still attend two days, even if the class meets four days. Ideally, instructors who are aware of student schedules and student learning goals could work with the students in their classes to design the instructional schedule for the week to accommodate the students. This would allow for better planning for instructors, and would provide students with an idea of what they will miss if they have to miss class. In addition, this model could potentially aid in student retention by helping students reach learning goals more rapidly than they would coming for fewer hours. As well, the increased classroom time could help to create social networks that prevent isolation.

With regard to enrollment and orientation there are two recommendations for program designers. The first recommendation would be to consider using managed enrollment to limit to orientations to once a month, or once a quarter. This would allow for a more efficient use of instructional time. Using managed enrollment would prevent instructors from having to use instructional time to conduct individual student assessments. Secondly, programs could consider recruiting other staff to conduct program orientations, allowing teachers focus only on instruction.

Need for orientation.

Two instructors in the Interview Group (Monica and Kim) and one instructor in the Focus Group (Karen) spoke of working for several years before understanding the big

picture in adult literacy. They spoke of not having an idea of how prevalent low literacy is nationally. They spoke of not knowing the full impact of low literacy on individuals, families, communities, and society. They also spoke of not having an idea of how their individual roles fit into the bigger picture at their organizations. They didn't realize that post testing was linked to program accountability and the programs' ability to maintain funding.

A recommendation for the field is to make certain that beginning teachers within and outside of WIA-funded programs receive an orientation to instruction that is designed to allow instructors to digest information, and situate it within their work contexts. ABLE programs (at least in Ohio) do provide a New Teacher Orientation that ABLE instructors must attend within their first year of teaching, but instructors indicated that its delivery does not promote absorption of, or application of the information and tools. The orientation provides instructors with a large binder full of information, but participants indicated that they do not access the binder beyond the training because the training is more focused on administrative requirements, such as correctly completing the required paperwork. An orientation for new instructors should be provided from the perspective of helping instructors do their jobs better, not just on program compliance.

Provide instructors with content standards.

Study participants spoke about needing guidance in instructional decision-making. Instructors shared that they did not have the background to know which lessons and materials were appropriate for students based on their grade level equivalents. Instructors spoke of not knowing where to begin with students once assessments were completed, and of not having guidelines for what students should know and be able to do.

There are content standards available for teachers within ABLE, yet the instructors in the study indicated that they had never seen them, or learned about them years into their instructional careers. Instructors outside of the ABLE system shared that they had no awareness of standards, and based decisions on the GED books at their sites. Instructors within and outside of ABLE should have these standards at their disposal.

Instructors need to be provided with a hard copy of the standards as their initial tool for literacy instruction. Instructors should also be provided with explicit instruction on how to use the standards as the basis for building a lesson. Materials used for instruction in the field differ, both between and within sites. If instructors were familiar with, and designed lessons according to the standards, there could be greater continuity between and within programs that would allow students to progress wherever they are, at an appropriate pace.

Provide instructors with access to data.

Instructors spoke about the lack of access that they have to student data. Instructors indicated that they collect data themselves during orientation, and then seldom see the data again, or they are not involved in the orientation process at all, and never see student data. Instructors discussed wanting to have information on the presence of learning disabilities, on student entry levels, student goals, and student learning styles. One participant, Monica, indicated that she had access to the information as the instructional assistant, but now as an instructor sees why the information is useful, but does not have access. She indicated that although her program collects this information from participants, the data is not entered quickly enough for instructors to use.

One recommendation for the field would be to expedite data entry, possibly by

moving toward the use of online, or at least electronic orientation forms. These forms could be designed to capture all of the information that programs currently collect on students, without having students enter their name, contact, and social security information on multiple forms. These forms could also be designed to automatically populate instructor data sheets that are then provided to instructors with information that could help influence instructional decision-making. This would allow instructors to know student entry levels, progress rates, attendance rates, assessment dates, learning goals, and learning styles, and information about any learning disabilities that students might have. Another recommendation would be to provide professional development on how those data can inform instruction.

Recommendations for higher education program designers.

A possible recommendation for practice would be for teacher preparation programs to expand course offerings to allow for an undergraduate major that provides the pedagogical foundation in education with a focus on the adult literacy learner and the content that they are required to master. This could allow students who are interested in education to know that the field exists, and could produce a pool of instructors with formal training in educating adult literacy learners from which program administrators can draw. This would be a viable option if programs were re-structured to provide full-time employment with benefits that would make a degree worth the financial investment. Until such time, the implication for professional development designers is to design a program of professional development that requires instructors to take a sequence that provides them with the knowledge and skills most critical for beginning instructors early in their careers, and that provides them with the opportunity to practice, evaluate, and

refine their implementation of instructional strategies.

Recommendations for authors.

Instructors need instructional materials that provide a more in-depth coverage of content, and explanations of how that content articulates within and across content areas. Instructors also need tips for how to engage students with the material in ways that do incorporate authentic materials; particularly those that help situate learning within the realities of their lives. For example, a math lesson that focuses on percentages could be used with advertisements for household products to discuss the effects of getting loans at different interest rates. Lessons on probability could make use of educational health pamphlets that discuss the incidence and prevalence of certain diseases or health conditions. A recommendation for the field would be to produce materials that provide instructors with more in depth background information on literacy topics, in a way that connects material to other materials, and that connects materials to students' realities. These materials should promote and suggest dynamic instructional methods that build on adult learning and development theory, cater to the different learning styles, promote strategies for helping learners move from concrete understandings of materials to abstract conceptualizations of literacy content, and suggest ways to build student background knowledge.

Recommendations for professional developers.

The theoretical framework of this study originated from the body of literature on teacher impact and student achievement, adult learning and development theory, and professional development in education. The body of literature on adult learning and development theory was used to describe the unique and evolving needs of adult learners,

and applies to the adult literacy educators as well, particularly in the context of professional development. The research that forms this theoretical base lead to the question of the adequacy of current models of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education where certification, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and knowledge of adult learners are not requirements for entry into the field. Examining these theories in light of findings about how adult literacy instructors indicated they have developed as teachers brings to bear important questions about current models of professional development.

A recommendation for professional development designers would be to educate adult literacy educators about existing adult learning theories while demonstrating and modeling how to design lessons that incorporate those theories. In other words, professional development should provide experiential learning opportunities for instructors, as they are learning about the benefit of including experiential learning activities for their students. Professional development experiences should challenge instructors' worldviews as instructors are learning about the potential of transformational learning that results from facing a disorienting dilemma. Professional development planners can incorporate lessons that promote self-direction in instructors, as a model for how to promote self-direction in students. This professional development could challenge instructors to design, implement, and evaluate a sample learning experience for their students that is built on these adult learning theories, with the only limits being that they cannot use textbooks, workbooks, or worksheets as a part of the lesson. Instructors could share their experiences, and reflect upon them with a partner, peer group, or cohort of other adult literacy educators. This sharing would provide the additional opportunity

to learn from the experiences of other instructors, and provide instructors with other lessons or ideas for lessons that are also built on adult learning and development theories. Creating communities of practice, with seasoned mentors at the helm, could potentially assist instructors in accessing educational leadership even if it does not exist within their program sites. This could be an important step in helping novice instructors build their knowledge and skill quickly so that it does not take four years to learn the ropes as study participants indicated. Instructors could get guidance and advice on instructional strategies, resources, challenges with specific students, and on using standards to guide instruction. Instructors could also gain lesson ideas from other instructors. Seasoned instructors who have content and pedagogical knowledge could help other instructors with mastering content, and share materials with other instructors, guiding them on selecting appropriate materials for students at different levels. This could address the shortage of materials that instructors indicated they often face, and the confusion about which materials to use in different instructional situations.

The body of literature on teacher quality underscores the importance of content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and demonstrates their impacts on student outcomes. With the current model of professional development in the State of Ohio, instructors who work seven hours or fewer are only required to participate in one professional development activity per year. Instructors who work over seven hours per week must participate in two activities each year. Attending the State conference at the end of the academic year, attending a workshop, or accessing professional development through the alternate delivery system (which could include watching a video or reading a book and answering questions about the materials) all satisfy the professional development

requirement. This leaves instructors to learn the content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge largely on their own through experiential, transformational, and self-directed learning. Based on study findings, this does not prepare instructors for delivering content across five subjects areas to students in a way that promotes conceptual understanding and comprehension of learning objectives.

While experiential learning theory acknowledges the vast experiences that adult learners bring to the learning environment, in the role of instructors the classroom is primarily an instructor's professional arena, where they are the professional and the students are the primary learners. In K-12 where instructors are required to be certified or be in the process of obtaining alternate certification, and in Head Start where Lead Teachers and Site administrators are required to have an Associates or Bachelor's degree in child development or a related field when hired, the mastery of minimum knowledge is required before teachers can enter the professional arena (A. Wilburn, personal communication, June, 2012). Experiential learning does take place in the K-12 and early childhood education contexts, but it adds to their field's established minimum knowledge requirement. With current models of hiring and professional development in adult literacy education, the classroom is both the instructor's learning environment and professional arena. Adult literacy educators shared that they do bring vast resources from their experiences and knowledge gained over the course of their lives in both formal and informal settings, and shared that they do create knowledge through their lived experiences as adult educators, yet, they have found this to be an inefficient method of preparation, indicating that it takes three to four years to learn to put some practices into place. As well, with an average of five years experience in teaching the literacy

curriculum, current teacher preparation and professional development practices have not allowed instructors to master the literacy content that they are assigned to teach.

An application of experiential learning to the professional development of adult literacy educators could include a method of assigning weighted values to earned credentials and experiences in determining professional development needs. For example, an instructor with a bachelors in education and a strong knowledge base in lesson planning and linking curricula and lessons to established benchmarks and standards might require fewer hours of professional development than a teacher who has ten years of experience working with adults, but no formal education in pedagogy. Similarly, content area assessments can help determine the degree to which professional development in content areas should cover the breadth of content, or depth in specific areas of content. This would allow instructors with strong, general math knowledge for example, to obtain professional development focused specifically on instructional approaches to teaching mathematics, and prevent that teacher from using their professional development requirement to review content with which he or she is already familiar.

Self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformational learning all require some level of reflection for learning to occur (Baumgartner, 2001; Kolb, 1984; Merriam et al., 2007). Study participants indicated that there is a lack of self-reflection amongst adult literacy educators. One reason offered for the lack of self-reflection is that instructors don't really have time for self-reflection, particularly when it comes to incorporating lessons or ideas from professional development received into instructional practice. Study participants felt strongly that a professional development program should

promote self-reflection. This is particularly important if experiential, transformational, and self-directed learning are the primary methods that instructors learn about adult literacy instruction. Participants indicated that this is the case: “That’s what we bring to the classroom, but we didn’t know that the first three or four or five or whatever years. We walked in there not knowing how to relate to an adult, how to be an adult educator, but we learned it (Richard, May, 2012).” This demonstrates that although instructors do learn from experience, it is not an efficient method of learning, and that learning may occur at the cost of student learning during an instructor’s first five years in the classroom. An implication for policy and practice would be to ensure that teachers are professionally developed more aggressively in the first two to three years of instruction, and that they have access to a veteran teacher who can serve as a mentor to help them learn their craft in a more comprehensive and efficient manner. This professional development should guide instructors in the process of self-reflection, and should include how to help students incorporate self-reflection into their learning. Professional developers could measure the impact of the new teacher learning curve on student-related outcomes. Are the students of novice instructors more likely to progress at a slower pace, display more inconsistent attendance, or experience more incidences of “stopping out” or “dropping out” as a result of frustration over teacher inexperience?

Professional development planners can encourage self-direction in instructors, particularly novice instructors, by guiding them in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of learning activities (Merriam et al., 2007). In the same way that many adult learners are on the cusp of transitions in their lives, instructors experience transitions as well. In fact, participants indicated that many of them entered the field because they

were in a period of transition so professional development for instructors should also assist adults in appropriating transitional learning, while demonstrating strategies for helping students to do the same (Wolf, 2005). In the same way that this helps adult learners understand the potential learning benefits of experiences, it can assist adult literacy educators in understanding the benefit of experiences for them and their students, and can also address negative emotions related to teaching experiences that if left unaddressed could potentially become barriers to instructor learning, and potentially to student learning (Merriam et al., 2007; Wolf 2005).

In designing learning activities, adult literacy educators are encouraged to realize the importance of identifying adult learners' development of self-directedness (Chu & Tsai, 2009; Terry, 2006). This holds true for planners of professional development for adult literacy educators, particularly when selecting and designing teaching materials, activities, and media, practitioners. Professional development planners must consider the differences in the levels of self-direction of their students, and guide students toward activities that support their learning goals appropriately (Terry, 2006). Instructors do seek out opportunities for professional development even if it is not required as a condition of their employment. Participants were recruited for the study because of relationships established with the researcher through professional development; professional development that they attend on days where they are off from work, and often not compensated for their time. This demonstrates self-direction in the instructors. Current professional development does not tend to encourage instructors to learn outside of their minimum professional development requirements, and has no accountability for learning that does occur in professional development activities.

Study participants who work within the State-funded system indicated that they have encountered the update model of professional development as described by Mott (2000) where they receive information on new policies in the field, or on administrative procedures, but that the training does not include improving skills. As a former coordinator within the ABLE system I would say that it was the predominant model of professional development, particularly for administrators. An implication for the field might be to revise standard training practice, for new instructors and new administrators, to include the development of procedural skills, and possibly mentoring on how to apply those procedural skills in practice. This mentoring should take the specific work contexts of instructors and administrators into consideration since programs are located in, and funded by a variety of organizations, each with their own set of administrative and reporting requirements and procedures. An additional step might be to require and provide this type of training to all instructors and administrators whether novice or veteran, depending on their identified needs.

The literature on adult learning and development theory also addresses the importance of attending to the varied needs of adult learners. The research that forms this theoretical base lead to the question of the adequacy of current models of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education where instructors select from available pre-designed offerings. Many of the available professional development opportunities are provided through alternate delivery methods such as reading a book or watching a video and answering questions about the material. These delivery methods do not consider the unique learning needs of instructors, and are offered without respect to the characteristics or learning styles, or work contexts of the instructors

who access them.

When asked about the forms of professional development that instructors engaged in, the predominant forms were workshops, listservs, and independent reading.

Professional development that results in teachers gaining new knowledge and skills, and implementing new strategies in the classroom will require a departure from current state and federal models of professional development, which are not based on best practices in professional development. This professional development must be based on practices that research has demonstrated leads to improved teacher quality, and should model instructional strategies that help teachers develop both content and pedagogical knowledge (Lucas, 2007; Lucas, Loo, & McDonald, 2005). This professional development should focus on the unique needs of adult learners, and should incorporate features that cater to their diverse needs (Lucas, 2007; Lucas, Loo, & McDonald, 2005; Mott, 2000).

Professional development activities should include experiential, transformational, and self-directed learning experiences, and should be embedded within the context in which teachers work. This would allow instructors to practice implementing strategies, reflect on that practice, and receive feedback from instructors and colleagues on how to modify implementation for improved practice (Smith, 2010). Smith (2010) indicated that professional development must reflect on real and current problems, so professional development that allows learners to reflect on research and apply it within their specific work contexts as professional development occurs would allow instructors to make professional development meaningful and applicable. Professional developers must use caution in facilitating conversations that address problems in a way that is productive.

During the focus group activity, it was very difficult to keep instructors focused, particularly when it came to generating suggestions for what they would like to see in terms of professional development. The tendency was for instructors to use the time to vent about their frustrations with teaching in adult literacy, from societal biases to lack of student motivation. For many of these instructors, the focus group activity was one of few opportunities to connect with other instructors who understand what it is like to be an adult literacy teacher (even with four of these instructors working for the same agency). Professional development that encourages collaboration among teachers would provide that outlet,

Professional development should happen in a learning culture (Smith, 2010).

Where programs are offered within educational settings, and there is staff dedicated to literacy, this should be encouraged, however, one challenge to the learning culture is that some literacy programs are located within sites where literacy is not the primary function of the agency but is a service that is provided in fulfillment of a greater mission. Within these types of agencies, the adult literacy instructor may be the only person on staff who works in literacy, knows anything about literacy, or has the time and interest to learn about literacy. A professional development model that is built to encourage interaction and collaboration within a cohort of adult literacy educators can create a learning community that could potentially survive beyond the professional development experience.

Smith (2010) suggests a reallocation of professional development funding away from state conferences and forms of professional development that do not lead to teacher change toward technical assistance for job embedded learning groups. I would argue that

the dollars available for PD could stretch further, reach more instructors, and provide professional development more specifically tailored to the individual needs of adult learners if professional development was built around current technology. This would allow for professional development that includes the features as critical for professional development to be effective, and could address the barriers that prohibit instructors from accessing PD such as the time and cost needed to travel to professional development activities, and the variety of professional development needs that exist among the diverse teaching workforce.

Administrators within the ABLE system attend professional development and meetings that represent the “update model” as advanced by Mott (2000) where administrators are updated on policy changes, reporting requirements, and grant applications. One recommendation for the field would be required training for administrators of adult literacy programs (both within and outside of ABLE) that focus on adult learning and development, on the needs of adult literacy learners, and the needs and challenges of adult literacy instructors. If administrators are at least familiar with best practice research in the field, and the practical implications of that research, they would be better positioned to offer educational leadership, or at least support to adult literacy educators. This could include designing programs with learner needs and instructional needs in mind.

Instructors indicated teaching two or more levels of students within their classes. One recommendation for program designers would be begin scheduling classes that allow each content area to be covered at each level, and to assign students to those classes based on their EFLs or GLEs. This would allow students to receive level appropriate

instruction in each of the content areas that they want to concentrate on during an academic period. As well, instructors could also be assigned based on their content area expertise, or based on their success with certain levels of learners. Instructors who have success with low level learners or learners with disabilities should be assigned to classes that will permit the teachers and students to be successful.

A recommendation for professional development designers would be to design professional development based on best practice research in teacher professional development, and contain features such as maximizing contact time, including follow-up activities, and using constructivist approaches (AIR, 2006). That professional development should include developing a conceptual understanding of the concepts. The professional development must also cover instructional strategies for teaching a diverse student body.

Instructors need instructional materials that provide a more in-depth coverage of content, and explanations of how that content articulates within and across content areas. Instructors also need tips for how to engage students with the material in ways that do incorporate authentic materials, particularly those that help situate learning within the realities of their lives. For example, a math lesson that focuses on percentages could be used with advertisements for household products to discuss the effects of getting loans at different interest rates. Lessons on probability could make use of educational health pamphlets that discuss the incidence and prevalence of certain diseases or health conditions. A recommendation for the field would be to produce materials that provide instructors with more in depth background information on literacy topics, in a way that connects material to other materials, and that connects materials to students' realities.

These materials should promote and suggest dynamic instructional methods that build on adult learning and development theory, cater to the different learning styles, and promote strategies for helping learners move from concrete understandings of materials to abstract conceptualizations of literacy content.

Co-researchers' model of professional development.

While developing a model based on best practices seems logical, what makes more sense is to engage current instructors in an inquiry process, through a research project that employs participatory action research (PAR) methodology in its investigation of teacher preparation and professional development in adult literacy education. PAR is a form of knowledge production that provides a vehicle for marginalized communities to examine social problems that affect their lives. In this instance, adult literacy educators, and the students they serve are the marginalized communities. PAR involves the collective participation of those traditionally viewed as “subjects” of a study in the role of co-researchers of social realities. By providing adult literacy educators with the tools of inquiry, encouraging them to critically examine their current realities, and providing access to research based best practices, they can imagine a model for CPE that would best meet their needs as practicing instructors.

PD that develops teachers to a level of current college readiness standards.

With only half of focus group members having the comfort and fluency with the basic skills content to complete a full basic skills assessment within the allotted time limit, it is clear that content area preparation is a critical need for professional development. Instructors need instruction on basic skills at the very least, but if the goal of literacy programs, particularly those that are funded by WIA is to help students

transition into postsecondary education or family sustaining employment opportunities, the standard for instructors should probably resemble college readiness standards.

Implications for policy makers then have to include requiring instructors to receive targeted professional development in the content areas within the first year or two of being hired. To fail to respond to such a basic need for instructors, is to accept the lack of student achievement that results from instructors lacking content knowledge (AIR, 2006; Lucas et al.; Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002; Lucal et al.; 2005; USDOE, 2002). What's more, with the amount of money that states spend for professional development (roughly \$2 million annually in Ohio according to ODE, 2009), it is possible to reallocate the funding to adopt more effective and efficient models of professional development that contain the features that research has demonstrated as effective for teacher change. The current model of teacher preparation and professional development is not providing instructors with the skill and knowledge they need to feel confident in their jobs.

PD that models instructional strategies.

Adult literacy educators must receive focused, sustained professional development that models instructional strategies that are effective with adult learners, particularly those with learning disabilities, including developing learner profiles that are unique to student learning needs (Taymans & Corley, 2001). In addition, the field must work to identify students with learning disabilities who have not been previously diagnosed to provide instructors with information on which instructional approaches might work best, versus allowing them to use trial and error to determine what works for specific students.

PD that addresses diversity and cultural beliefs.

A surprising finding during the study was the range of attitudes that instructors shared about the adult literacy learners themselves. Due to my own very positive experiences with students, I was initially taken aback by comments that I heard as I transcribed the focus group pair data. Instructors shared the empathy and respect that they have for their students, but also shared their views and cultural beliefs about students, which were often very similar to the views that instructors criticized society for having about the students. These beliefs seemed to conflict with the empathy and respect that instructors indicated they had for the students. For example, instructors would say:

I think it's a kind of big step to walk in there as an adult and say you know I need this. I wouldn't want to do it (Liz, May, 2012).

I have total respect for our students. They work so hard. It is a privilege to work with them (Rose, June, 2012).

Then instructors would make comments that called that respect and empathy into question. For example, Edward stated:

I basically command of my students that they take this extremely seriously and that educating them is extremely important. And it takes a while to drive that point home but once we establish that then it's a no-nonsense, we are not back in the 7th grade or 8th grade. This is adult education, and we expect that level of respect, concentration in the classroom. The classroom is in sorts an educational sanctuary (Edward, May, 2012).

This made me question if the classroom was a sanctuary for the students as well, or for this particular instructor alone. It also made me question the extent to which instructors'

cultural beliefs about students influence instruction.

These findings support the work of Sherman et al. (1999) who indicated that in addition to possessing content knowledge, and having a repertoire of varied instructional strategies, having an awareness of diversity is a critical competency for adult literacy educators. Participants in this study identified these as learning needs that should be addressed through professional development. Instructors believed this diversity awareness training should include having an understanding of the adult literacy learner population and the barriers that they face. This should include training on issues of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, primary language, and class, but should seek to evoke an awareness of the dangers of “othering,” and an awareness of biases that instructors may hold subconsciously, but still communicate to their students.

Recommendation for a model of professional development for adult educators.

Given that teachers need to be familiar with 1) adult learning and development theory, 2) the complexity of reading instruction, 3) the concepts they must cover in math, 4) the strategies that are most useful for learning disabled learners, and 5) general pedagogical knowledge needed to plan, deliver and evaluate instruction, a certification program that includes five, semester-long classes offered on a college campus, in a blended delivery format might be an effective model for providing instructors with a strong foundation upon which they can build instructional practices (Lucas, Loo, & McDonald, 2005; NCSALL, 2002; Smith & Gillespie, 2007) The blended model that combines web-based and face-to-face classes can remove scheduling and travel barriers that can interfere with participation in CPE.

Completion of all five courses would result in a Certificate of Professional Competence in Adult Literacy Education. The goal for the state would be to eventually have a fully certified teaching force within five years of implementation. This would be an initial departure from current practice, but once current instructors are certified, the current model of professional development could be used to maintain certification through a minimum requirement of additional CPE. New teachers would be expected to become certified within two years of hire. The state could require teachers to pay for a portion of the certification and reserve complete reimbursement as an incentive to retain certified teachers. In addition, program administrators would be required to obtain certification as well since they are the bridge between state policy and program practice, and cannot demonstrate instructional leadership to serve as a guide for new instructors without this knowledge. Participation of program administrators would also raise awareness of the needs of learning disabled learners and allow the program sites to be equipped with available tools and accommodations for those learners.

The semester-long format will maximize contact time, include follow-up activities, and provide feedback from transfer of learning activities. Additionally, as the course would be offered during the academic year, it will also provide opportunities for problem solving as instructors incorporate course content into the work context, and as they analyze student work. The courses would address the content areas typically taught in the adult literacy context (mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies). The focus of these courses would be to provide instructors with the concepts and content that they are expected to teach, and to expose them to the concepts and content using the same constructivist approaches that the literature encourages instructors to use with their

students. For example, in social studies, instead of having students complete worksheets that essentially test their reading comprehension (the current norm) the students would view film footage about different historical events. This approach gives the history a context, provides perspective, and allows for a multimodal presentation of information that benefits students with visual and auditory learning styles. In addition, incorporating historical fiction for reading and creative writing assignments during the same timeframe would help paint the picture of the lives of people who experienced various historical events and allow students to practice their writing skills.

The course would also address fundamentals of teaching, the content standards and indicators of program quality that are the foundation of the state funded program, and strategies for working with learners with special needs. Instructors would learn about learning and development, learn how to design lesson plans, learn to use a variety of media and authentic materials in course design, use a variety of methods to measure student progress, and learn methods for managing a class in an open enrollment setting. Teachers would learn how to use the content standards as a guide for lesson/thematic unit planning. They would also learn how to use the learning style inventories that students complete as a tool throughout the student's learning versus completing the form at orientation and never looking at it again. Finally, the course would include information and practice with diagnosing learning challenges (not a technical diagnosis, but at least to know if someone knows the sounds letters make before they are expected to read) and applying learning strategies to assist the learners who have them.

The blended course design would allow for participants across the state to access the course. The first two and last two sessions would be face-to-face sessions that would

allow for more practical demonstrations of techniques and opportunities to practice. The first two sessions would demonstrate the learning environment that instructors should attempt to replicate in their classrooms. The last two sessions would allow them to demonstrate mastery of content and techniques. The online sessions would contain more of the theory and background information. Ideally these sessions as well would be interactive, web-hosted where teachers meet weekly at a designated time and can chat with the instructor while viewing course materials.

After achieving initial certification, the current PD delivery system can provide some workshops to suggest new ideas to instructors. Alternate deliver systems would be appropriate for many of those lessons. In addition, instructors should have to engage in some kind of learning activity to maintain certification. Instructors should have to demonstrate how the learning will impact classroom practice as part of their CPE. Many of these changes in professional development can be made without disrupting the current delivery system and within the current State budget

Future Studies

A study that collects demographic data over a larger geographic region could provide a better idea of the field of practicing adult literacy educators. This study should include more specific information on teachers' work contexts, for example, the number of hours taught per week, the number of classes that are offered during those hours, and the distribution of instruction for each class over the five content areas. A study of this nature would provide a better understanding of how instruction occurs across the field, and could also provide some idea of how frequently students have access to instruction on average, and the resulting gains that can be expected over the course of a program

year based on those hours. This could help to manage expectations with students and funders of what can reasonably be accomplished in one year, or could help instructors have an idea of how long they need to retain a student in a program before they can expect to see an grade level gain. This could also inform assessment practices, and prevent students from being overexposed to assessments that are administered before they can be reasonably expected to show progress. Another potential benefit of this type of study could be that it could influence policy makers to structure programs in a way that extends learning time, or influence assessment policies in a way that allows programs to reach accountability measures, but by putting student needs first.

While data from a small group of participants in this study provided some insight on instructors' readiness and comfort with the materials covered on the basic skills test, a study that measured the basic skills of a much larger group of instructors while providing diagnostic profiles would provide important information to policy makers and professional developers on instructors' training needs in the content areas. To do this, instructors would have to be assured and reassured that 1) the purpose of the study was to provide information for the design of professional development, 2) that tests and results are be random and anonymous, and 3) that instructors nationwide would be completing the same assessment. Assessments conducted across multiple states, possibly at state conferences where large numbers of instructors can be accessed would permit a mass testing of instructors, and could potentially provide very useful information.

Studies by Sherman et al. (1999) indicated the competencies and performance indicators to guide the design of professional development for adult literacy instructors. Three competencies described in that study included possessing content knowledge,

having a repertoire of varied instructional strategies, and having an awareness of diversity. Participants in this study identified these as learning needs, and indicated that they should be included in any professional development model. Included in diversity awareness, instructors identified having an understanding of the adult literacy learner population and the barriers that they face as critical components of diversity awareness. Throughout the study, particularly during the focus group activity, instructors offered many theories for student behavior, particularly those that impact attendance and classroom management. A future study on the attitudes, barriers, behaviors, and motivations of adult literacy learners is necessary to design such a course. As with this study, where the experts on instructors' experiences were current instructors, the experts on student attitudes and motivation would be current students. A study that follows a participatory action research methodology would allow for knowledge about adult literacy learners to be generated by the learners themselves. PAR methodology transforms the inquiry process to a collaborative endeavor that privileges the knowledge of potential research subjects, and elevates them as a result of that knowledge to co-researchers in the production of new knowledge (Miller & Maguire, 2009). With the aid of a researcher, adult literacy students could discuss attitudes, behaviors, barriers and motivation and other issues important to students. The adult literacy students themselves could design and pilot surveys around those issues, distribute surveys to students in other programs, analyze survey data, conduct focus group activities using information from the survey data, transcribe, analyze, and code focus group data, and report on their findings. The research participation could complement their literacy learning activities, create agency among adult literacy learners, and provide information on why students access,

remain in, or leave literacy programs.

A future study that includes direct observation of instructors while conducting lessons would provide insight on the types of instructional strategies that instructors use in the classroom. This could inform professional development, as well as evaluate how professional development impacts instructional practice. For example, an initial study could consist of surveying or interviewing instructors about the methods they use, then observing and recording those instructors as they teach, and reviewing film footage with instructors to determine where identified strategies were used. Professional development could be designed around these findings, targeting instructional approaches that are not observed in practice but that the research has found to be effective with adult literacy learners. Observations could then be conducted to determine the extent to which instructors' instructional practices have changed as a result of the professional development received.

An interesting study might be to examine instructors' views of, or use of prep time. Focus Group participants seemed to feel that content area learning would be more complete if instructors had additional prep time, which implies that the learning should only occur if they are paid for that time. Some might argue that content knowledge is a necessary part of the job of teaching, and that the purpose of prep time is to design lessons around content with which instructors should already be familiar. It would be interesting to see what all instructors include in prep time before requesting that the field provide additional time for prep. It may be that prep time is not necessary for all instructors, or for all of instruction. In programs where instructors use programmed instruction or computer aided instruction where students can access a series of basic skill

lessons whether the instructor is present or not, perhaps prep time is not necessary. In programs where instructors design experiential and transformational learning experiences based on content, prep time is necessary. It would be interesting to see how those hours are allocated across states, and which tasks instructors complete within those hours.

With the range of comments about students that instructors contributed as a part of the study data, I would be remiss if I did not suggest a study that reflected instructors' cultural beliefs. It would be interesting to collect recordings of conversations of instructors (and administrators), and then have someone who is not familiar with the participants or context transcribe and code those statements, indicating statements they perceived as negative. These recordings, along with their assigned codes could be played back to instructors to see if they would code it differently, or how they would explain the comments they made. I was very tempted throughout the study to call individual instructors to ask those questions, but instead just provided the complete transcripts of sessions to the instructors to get feedback. Even in the categories where instructor comments were coded as "negative views about students," overall participants seemed to support and agree with the categories and supporting statements. Along with this study on teacher's cultural beliefs, it might also be interesting to compare those beliefs with students' beliefs about how their instructors perceive them. For example, one participant shared an experience where a student overheard her calling another student an expletive, and this incident was reported back to the student to whom she was referring. In many of her comments she was open about her concern for her students, but I wonder which message students receive, and if those messages might also be related to student persistence.

Smith (2010) wrote that teacher quality and effectiveness are influenced by instructors' backgrounds, experiences, and qualifications. A future study could investigate how instructor characteristics might influence student persistence and student performance. For example, a study that looks at the extent to which certain instructor characteristics (instructor background, experience in the field, attitude toward students and cultural beliefs, and self-efficacy beliefs) predict student attendance rates could determine which factors have the biggest impact on whether students will stop out or drop out of literacy programs. This information could influence hiring decisions, allowing program administrators to select candidates who are more likely to positively impact student persistence, and therefore student achievement rates. This information could also inform professional development planning, allowing planners to target those variables that are most likely to impact persistence rates. It might also be interesting to look at student persistence rates for instructors over time as they engage in quality professional learning and professional development activities.

A pilot study of a model of professional development designed upon research based best practices in adult literacy, teacher preparation, adult learning and development, and professional development (particularly professional development in mathematics and science) could provide critical information to the field. This type of study could measure the initial impacts of such a program on instructor content knowledge, instructor pedagogical knowledge, instructional practices, instructor self-efficacy, learner engagement and retention, and learner achievement. Feedback from the study, from professional development staff, participating instructors, and the students of these instructors could provide valuable feedback to refine such a model, which can then

be scaled to larger geographic areas. This would allow the federal and state governments to base policies around what has worked in practical settings before policy change is initiated.

Limitations

The sample for the quantitative portion of the study included data from twenty-five instructors. The sample for the qualitative portion of the study involved twenty instructors from urban sites in Northeast Ohio. The study provides information on the experiences of this group of instructors, but does not suggest related impacts on student achievement since student achievement data were not made available. As the findings are limited to the experiences in the state being studied, and participants self-selected rather than randomly selected, the study sample is not representative of the population of adult literacy instructors. Therefore study results are not generalizable to conditions in other states.

Conclusion

Adult literacy educators work with adult learners to increase their ability to read, write, speak, function, make use of information presented in mathematical forms, and use printed and written information to function in society, to achieve their goals, and to develop their knowledge and potential (Askov, 2000; Gal, 2002; National Assessment of Adult Literacy, 2003; Tout & Schmidt, 2002). Often, adult learners access adult literacy services in pursuit of the GED credential, which is often needed to obtain employment. There is concern internationally about the quality of instructors who teach in adult literacy, due to current hiring policies, which do not require instructors to have degrees in education or in the content areas that they teach as a condition of hire.

In this study of thirty-seven adult literacy educators, twenty-four from within the federally and state-funded adult literacy education system in Ohio, findings were that instructors do not feel fully prepared for adult literacy instruction. Instructors' degrees in K-12 education, and advanced degrees in adult learning and development do not prepare them to teach five areas of adult literacy content to a diverse body of students. Past professional development, while helpful, did not fill the gaps in instructor knowledge and skill. Years of experience teaching in adult literacy has also failed to provide instructors with a conceptual understanding of the literacy content, an arsenal of strategies to use with adult learners, or the expertise to help students with learning disabilities find effective strategies to aid their learning.

It is the hope of the researcher that this work, and the courage and dedication of thirty-seven teachers in Ohio, will add urgency to the move toward professionalization of our field.

REFERENCES

- American Institutes for Research. (2006). A review of the literature in adult numeracy: research and conceptual issues. Washington, DC: American Institutes for Research.
- Askov, Eunice N. (2007). The Brave New World of Workforce Education. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education*, 83, 59-69.
- Association for Children and Adults with LD. (2010) About specific learning disabilities. Retrieved, March 17, 2011, from <http://www.acldonline.org/about-specific-learning-disabilities/about-sld-definition.html>
- Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist*, 28, 117-148.
- Baumgartner, L.M. (2001). An update on transformational learning. In S.B. Merriam (Ed.), *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 89. *The new update on adult learning theory* (pp. 15-24). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Case, R. (1996). Introduction: Reconceptualizing the nature of children's conceptual structures and their development in middle childhood. In R. Case & Y. Okamoto, *The role of central conceptual structures in the development of children's thought*. Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development (pp. 1–26), Serial No. 246, Vol. 6.
- Comings, J. & Soricone, L. (2007). *Adult Literacy Research: Opportunities and Challenges*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Occasional Paper, National Institute for Literacy, Washington DC
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design, choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications.

- Darling-Hammond, L., & Youngs, P. (2002). Defining “high-qualified teachers”: What does “scientifically-based research” actually tell us? *Educational Researcher*, 31(9), 13–25.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: 595 Macmillan.
- Fine, M.; Torre, M.E.; Boudin, K.; et al. *Participatory action research: From within and beyond prison bars*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2003.
- Guy, T. (2005). *The adult literacy education system in the United States*. Paper commissioned for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2006, Literacy for Life. New York: UNESCO.
- Hall, T., Strangman, N., & Meyer, A. (2003). *Differentiated instruction and implications for UDL implementation*. Wakefield, MA: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum. Retrieved March 22, 2010 from http://www.cast.org/publications/ncac/ncac_diffinstructudl.html
- Knowles, M. (1973). *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. Gulf Publishing Company, Houston TX
- Lather, P. (1986). Research as praxis. *Harvard Educational Review*, 56(3), 257-277.
- Lucas, N. (2007). The in-service training of adult literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of Other Languages teachers in England; the challenges of a ‘standards-led model’. *Journal of In-Service Education*, 33 (1), 125-142.
- Lucas, N., Loo, S., & McDonald, J. (2005). Combining ‘subject knowledge’ with ‘how to teach’: an exploratory study of new initial teacher education for teachers of adult literacy, numeracy and English for Speakers of other Languages. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 24 (4), 337-350.
- Mellard, D.F., & Patterson, M.B. (2008). Contrasting Adult Literacy Learners With and Without Specific Learning Disabilities. *Remedial and Special Education*, 29(3), 133-144.

- Merriam, S.B., Caffarella, R.S., & Baumgartner, L.M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Messemer, J. (2011). The Historical Practice of Correctional Education in the United States: A review of Literature. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 1(17), 91-100.
- Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center (Summer, 1995) *Adults with Learning Disabilities: Definitions and Issues*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from <http://www.ericdigests.org/1998-2/adults.htm>.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2003). *State and County Estimates of Low Literacy*. Retrieved, February 7, 2009, from <http://nces.ed.gov/naal/estimates/StateEstimates.aspx>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). *Report of the National Reading Panel. Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (1990). *National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities definition of learning disabilities*, Retrieved March, 14, 2011, from <http://www.ldonline.org/pdfs/njcld/NJCLDDefinitionofLD.pdf>
- Office of the Inspector General. (2011). Most Early Head Start Teachers Have the Required Credentials but Challenges Exist, OEI-05-10-00240, August 2011.
- Ohio Department of Education. (2009). *Ohio Department of Education professional development policy*. Retrieved November 2, 2009, from <http://www.uso.edu/network/workforce/able/faqs.php>

- Pannucci, L., & Walmsley, S.A. (2007). Supporting learning-disabled adults in literacy. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 50 (7), 540-546.
- Ross-Gordon, J. M. (1998). Literacy education for adults with learning disabilities. In S. Vogel and S. Reder (Eds.), *Learning disabilities, adult education and literacy* (pp. 69-88). Paul Brookes Publisher.
- Saxe, G.B. (1988). Candy selling and math learning. *Educational Researcher*, 17 (6), 14-21.
- Shento, A.K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63-76.
- Smith, C. (2010). The great dilemma of improving teacher quality in adult learning and literacy. *Adult Basic Education and Literacy Journal*, 4(2), 67-74.
- Smith, C., & Gillespie, M. (2007). Research on Professional Development and Teacher Change: Implications for Adult Basic Education, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy (NCSALL); Review of Adult Learning and Literacy, Vol. 7, Connecting Research, Policy, and Practice, Ch. 7.
- Smith & Gomez, 2011). Certifying adult education faculty and staff. Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy.
- Smith, C., & Hofer, J. (2003). *The characteristics and concerns of adult basic education teachers* (National Center for the Study of Adult Learning Literacy). Boston: National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy.
- Smith, M. C. (2006). The preparation and stability of the ABE teaching force: Current conditions and future prospects. In J. Comings, B. Garner, & C. Smith (Eds.), *Review of adult learning and literacy: Connecting research, policy and practice-Volume 6* (pp. 165-195). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates, Publishers.

- Subban, J. (2007). Adult literacy education and community development. *Journal of Community Practice, 15*, 67-90.
- Swackhamer, L. E., Koellner, K. A., Basile, C. G., & Kimbrough, D. (2009). Increasing the self-efficacy of in-service teachers through content knowledge. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 36*(2), 63-78.
- Taymans, J. M., & Corley, M. A. (2001). Enhancing services to inmates with learning disabilities: Systematic reform of prison literacy programs. *Journal of Correctional Education, 52*(2), 74-78.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *Meeting the highly qualified teachers challenge: The Secretary's annual report on teacher quality*. Washington, DC: Department of Education, Office of Postsecondary Education, Office of Policy, Planning and Innovation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

NRS Educational Functioning Levels for Reading, Writing, and Numeracy

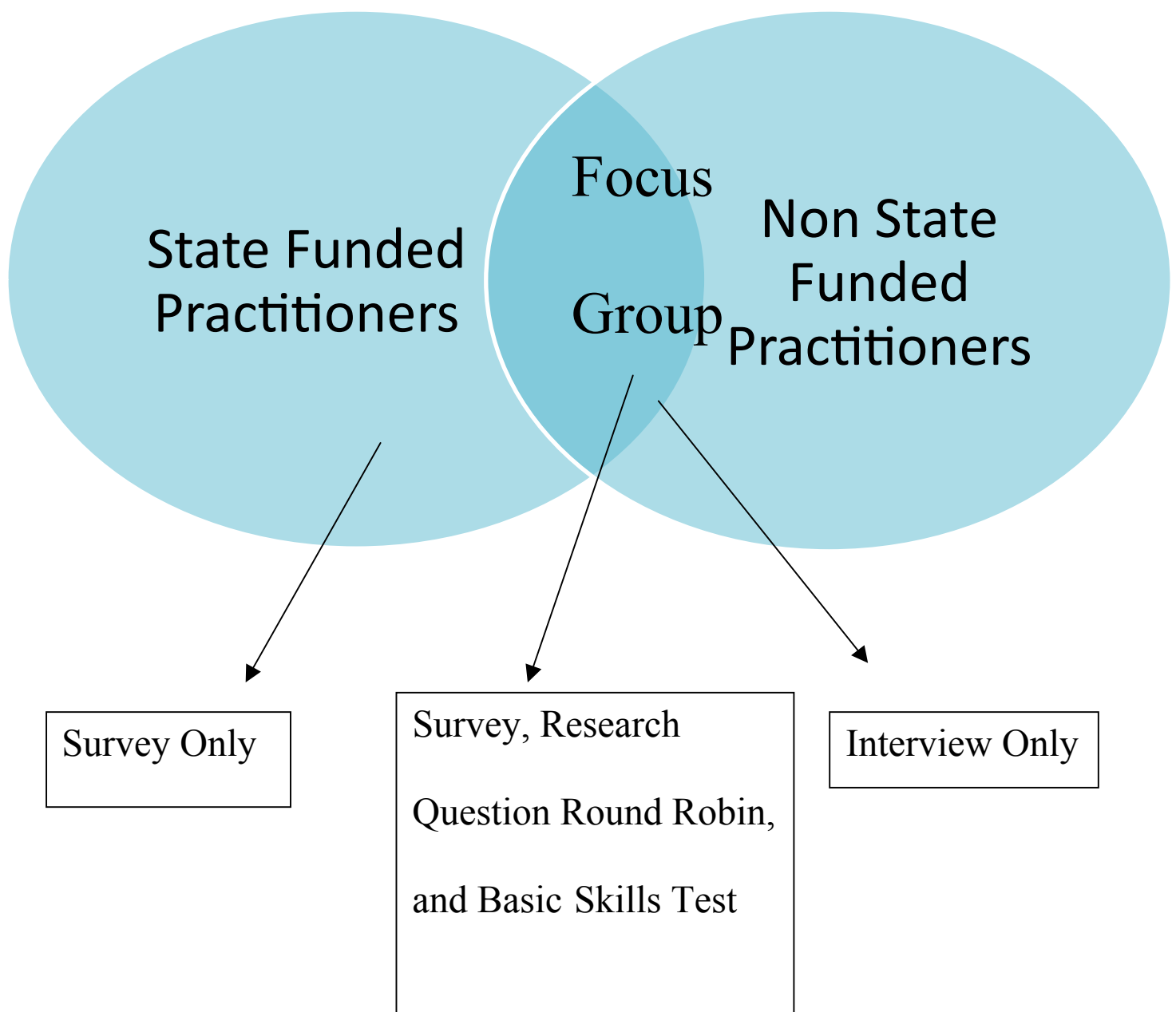
National Reporting System. (2012). NRS Implementation Guidelines, retrieved from <http://www.nrsweb.org/docs/ImplementationGuidelines.pdf>

<i>Literacy Level</i>	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills
Beginning ABE Literacy Test Benchmark: <i>TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 0–1.9):</i> Reading: 367 and below Total Math: 313 and below Language: 389 and below Wonderlic GAIN scale scores English: 200-406 Math: 200-314	Individual has no or minimal reading and writing skills. May have little or no comprehension of how print corresponds to spoken language and may have difficulty using a writing instrument. At the upper range of this level, individual can recognize, read, and write letters and numbers but has a limited understanding of connected prose and may need frequent re-reading. Can write a limited number of basic sight words and familiar words and phrases; may also be able to write simple sentences or phrases, including very simple messages. Can write basic personal information. Narrative writing is disorganized and unclear, inconsistently uses simple punctuation (e.g., periods, commas, question marks), and contains frequent errors in spelling.	Individual has little or no recognition of numbers or simple counting skills or may have only minimal skills, such as the ability to add or subtract single digit numbers.
Beginning Basic Education Test Benchmark: <i>TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 2–3.9):</i> Reading: 368–460 Total Math: 314–441 Language: 390–490 Wonderlic GAIN scale scores English: 407-525 Math: 315-522	Individual can read simple material on familiar subjects and comprehend simple and compound sentences in single or linked paragraphs containing a familiar vocabulary; can write simple notes and messages on familiar situations but lacks clarity and focus. Sentence structure lacks variety, but individual shows some control of basic grammar (e.g., present and past tense) and consistent use of punctuation (e.g., periods, capitalization).	Individual can count, add, and subtract three digit numbers, can perform multiplication through 12, can identify simple fractions, and perform other simple arithmetic operations.

<i>Literacy Level</i>	Basic Reading and Writing	Numeracy Skills
Low Intermediate Basic Education Test Benchmark: <i>TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 4–5.9):</i> Reading: 461–517 Total Math: 442–505 Language: 491–523 Wonderlic GAIN scale scores English: 526–661 Math: 523–669	Individual can read text on familiar subjects that have a simple and clear underlying structure (e.g., clear main idea, chronological order); can use context to determine meaning; can interpret actions required in specific written directions; can write simple paragraphs with a main idea and supporting details on familiar topics (e.g., daily activities, personal issues) by recombining learned vocabulary and structures; and can self and peer edit for spelling and punctuation errors.	Individual can perform with high accuracy all four basic math operations using whole numbers up to three digits and can identify and use all basic mathematical symbols.
High Intermediate Basic Education Test Benchmark: <i>TABE (9–10) scale scores (grade level 6–8.9):</i> Reading: 518–566 Total Math: 506–565 Language: 524–559 Wonderlic GAIN scale scores English: 662–746 Math: 670–775 <i>WorkKeys scale scores:</i> Reading for Information: 75–78 Writing: 75–77 Applied Mathematics: 75–77	Individual is able to read simple descriptions and narratives on familiar subjects or from which new vocabulary can be determined by context and can make some minimal inferences about familiar texts and compare and contrast information from such texts but not consistently. The individual can write simple narrative descriptions and short essays on familiar topics and has consistent use of basic punctuation but makes grammatical errors with complex structures.	Individual can perform all four basic math operations with whole numbers and fractions; can determine correct math operations for solving narrative math problems and can convert fractions to decimals and decimals to fractions; and can perform basic operations on fractions.
Low Adult Secondary Education Test Benchmark: <i>TABE (9–10): scale scores (grade level 9–10.9):</i> Reading: 567–595 Total Math: 566–594 Language: 560–585 Wonderlic GAIN scale scores English: 747–870 Math: 776–854 <i>WorkKeys scale scores:</i> Reading for Information: 79–81 Writing: 78–85 Applied Mathematics: 78–81	Individual can comprehend expository writing and identify spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors; can comprehend a variety of materials such as periodicals and nontechnical journals on common topics; can comprehend library reference materials and compose multiparagraph essays; can listen to oral instructions and write an accurate synthesis of them; and can identify the main idea in reading selections and use a variety of context issues to determine meaning. Writing is organized and cohesive with few mechanical errors; can write using a complex sentence structure; and can write personal notes and letters that accurately reflect thoughts.	Individual can perform all basic math functions with whole numbers, decimals, and fractions; can interpret and solve simple algebraic equations, tables, and graphs and can develop own tables and graphs; and can use math in business transactions.

APPENDIX B

Study Participants and Data Sources



APPENDIX C

Survey

A. Teacher Preparation and Experience

1. Please describe your educational background below.

	Attended		Graduated	Year	Field of Study
	Yes	No			
High School			Diploma GED		
University/College			BS BA Other		
Graduate Study			MA MS		
Graduate Study			EdD PhD		
Other: (Please describe)					

2. How long have you been teaching in adult education?

- a) 1-5 years
- b) 6-10 years
- c) 11-15 years
- d) 16-20 years
- e) More than 20 years

3. Please describe any teaching experience you have outside of adult education (the number of years, grade, subject)

4. How did you enter the field of adult education?

5. Please answer yes or no for the following statements regarding teaching certification:

- a) My current teaching assignment requires certification? Yes No
- b) I have a state issued teaching certification? Yes No

6. Please answer yes or no to the following statements to describe your main teaching assignment.

I currently teach within a school district	Yes	No
I teach ABE	Yes	No
I teach Pre-GED	Yes	No
I teach GED/Adult Secondary	Yes	No
I am employed full-time as an adult literacy teacher	Yes	No
I am employed part-time as an adult literacy teacher	Yes	No
I am a volunteer teacher/tutor	Yes	No

7. Please indicate the number of hours you teach adult literacy each week.

8. During the last academic year (2010-2011), please indicate the percentage of time you spent teaching the following subjects (percentages should add up to 100):

- I teach reading _____%of the time.
- I teach writing _____%of the time.
- I teach mathematics _____%of the time.
- I teach science _____%of the time.
- I teach social studies _____%of the time.

B. Teaching Methods and Practices

9. How does your formal educational training (college/university study) inform your choice of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies?

10. How has the professional development that you have received informed your choice of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies?

11. Please indicate the areas in which you feel you would like additional training as a Reading Instructor.

- ☐ helping learners with word attack and decoding strategies (i.e. phonics)
- ☐ helping learners with comprehension strategies
- ☐ integrating reading and writing approaches
- ☐ what models of teaching reading are effective with adults
- ☐ recognizing reading disabilities
- ☐ motivating learners to read
- ☐ other _____

12. Please indicate the areas in which you feel you would like additional training as a Writing Instructor.

- ☐ teaching basic skills (i.e. spelling and punctuation)
- ☐ using process writing techniques
- ☐ using technology (i.e. word processing) for writing instruction
- ☐ integrating writing and reading approaches
- ☐ helping students overcome their fear of writing
- ☐ teaching workplace writing (i.e. memos, faxes, reports, letters)
- ☐ other _____

13. Please indicate the areas in which you feel you would like additional training as a Math Instructor.

- ☐ teaching basic mathematics skills (place value/ addition/subtraction)
- ☐ helping learners develop problem solving skills
- ☐ teaching fractions, decimals and percents
- ☐ integrating technology (i.e. spreadsheets) into mathematics instruction
- ☐ using and interpreting statistics and graphs
- ☐ helping learners develop number sense and estimating skills
- ☐ other _____

18. Please describe the areas in which you feel you would like additional training as a Science and Social Studies Instructor.

C. Professional Development

14. Please select the answer that most closely describes what you believe is the primary purpose of professional development for you at the present time. (Choose ONE only)

- a) ____ To give me a new perspective on teaching
- b) ____ To help me to understand the needs of learners
- c) ____ To provide information on how adults learn
- d) ____ To provide techniques which I can use immediately
- e) ____ To provide information that is new to me
- f) ____ To demonstrate strategies other teachers use
- g) ____ Other (Please specify)_____

15. At this point in your career, what are your priorities for your personal professional development? (Choose 3, 1= top priority)

- a) ____ Improve what I know about how people learn in different content areas
- b) ____ Add to my instructional skills
- c) ____ Add to my knowledge about teaching adults
- d) ____ Know where to access instructional resources
- e) ____ Learn how other teachers conduct their practice
- f) ____ Learn to incorporate technology into instruction
- g) ____ Improve classroom management skills
- h) ____ Improve my content knowledge
- i) ____ Other_____

16. Below is a list of professional development activities. For those activities in which you have participated as a learner in the last year (2010-2011), please rate how useful were those activities for your professional growth?

Activity		If you participated, how useful was the activity?			
		Least Useful	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Workshops provided by program colleagues					
Workshops conducted by outside consultants					
University Courses					
Activities, such as conferences or working					

groups (COABE, AAACE)					
Serving on a committee within program					
Internet courses, bulletin boards or listservs.					
Collaborative team work with other teachers					
Inquiry based projects					
Independent professional reading					

17. Please indicate how useful the following professional development formats would be to you at this point in your career?

	Very Useful	Useful	Somewhat Useful	Not Useful
Program workshops provided by colleagues				
Program workshops provided by outside consultants				
Inquiry based projects / research project				
Independent /self study				
Content/subject matter specific training				
Distance learning course (i.e. Web/TV)				
University based courses				
Courses via CD ROM				
Video conferences				

18. Were you able to participate in a professional development activity in any of the following areas during 2010-2011? Please indicate yes or no.

Professional Development Activities in 2010-2011	Yes	No
Instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing effectively		
Instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively		
Instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers		
Instructional strategies for teaching in content areas		

Investigating effective lesson/curriculum planning		
Opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development		
Strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences		
Exploring classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style		
Help learners meet their goals for work, family and self		
Accommodating widely varied ability levels within the same classroom		
Integrating technology into the classroom		
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)		

19. Please indicate which professional development activities you would be interested in having available.

Instructional strategies for teaching reading and writing effectively	Very Interested	Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not Interested
Instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively				
Instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers				
Instructional strategies for teaching in content areas				
Investigating effective lesson/curriculum planning				
Opportunities to engage in work on adult learning and development				
Strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences				
Exploring classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style				
Help learners meet their goals for work, family and self				
Accommodating widely varied ability levels within the same classroom				
Integrating technology into the classroom				
OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)				

20. How well prepared do you feel you are to:

	Not Prepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Very Prepared
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching reading effectively				
Use varied instructional strategies for teaching mathematics effectively				
Use varied instructional strategies to prepare learners for work/careers				
Use instructional strategies for teaching in content areas				
Implement effective lesson, curriculum planning				
Implement strategies based on theories of adult learning and development				
Use strategies for recognizing and accommodating adults with learning differences				
Explore classroom techniques for determining learner needs and learning style				
Help learners meet their learning goals for work, family, and self				
Accommodate widely varied ability levels within the same classroom				
Integrate technology into the classroom				

21. For the professional development in which you participated during the last year, did you receive any of the following types of support?

	Yes	No
Released time from teaching		
Scheduled professional development time within the hours for which you were paid		
Stipend for professional development activities that take place outside of work hours.		
Full or partial reimbursement for tuition		
Reimbursement for conference or workshop fees and expenses		
Grant to support a special professional development project		
Other		

22. Which of these types of support would be most effective in helping you to engage in professional development activities? Please rank the top three, with 1=most important.

- a) ___ Released time from teaching
- b) ___ Scheduled professional development time within the hours for which you are paid
- c) ___ Stipend for professional development activities that take place outside of work hours.
- d) ___ Full or partial reimbursement for tuition for university based courses
- e) ___ Reimbursement for conference or workshop fees and expenses
- f) ___ Grant to support a special professional development project
- g) ___

Other _____

E. Teacher Profile

Organization:

County:

Year of birth:

Gender: Male or Female

May we quote your comments anonymously? Yes No

APPENDIX D

Alignment of Survey and Focus Group Questions to Research Questions

Research Questions	Existing Survey Questions	Additional Survey Questions	Focus Group Questions
What is the essence of the experience of becoming an adult literacy educator?	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13, 14, 18		1, 2, 6

What knowledge and skills do past formal educational experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?	19, 20, 21	13. How does your formal educational training (college/university study) inform your choice of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies?	3, 4, 5, 6, 7
What knowledge and skills do past professional development experiences contribute to adult literacy educators' instructional practice?	18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28 split, 29	14. How has the professional development that you have received informed your choice of curriculum, materials, and instructional strategies?	3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
What model of professional development is necessary to adequately equip adult literacy educators for instruction?	18, 30, 31		12, 13, 14

APPENDIX E

Follow-Up Interview Questions

First and Last

Name _____

Unique ID # _____

Background and Experience

- 1) Describe a typical workday in your classroom, including number of students involved, activities conducted, and materials used. How would you describe the typical approach to instruction?
- 2) How do you make decisions on what to include and what to exclude in your instruction, and which instructional strategies to use? In what ways is this informed by your formal education? In what ways is this informed by the professional development that you have received?
- 3) How do you identify learning disabilities in students and what strategies do you use to accommodate learners who appear to have (or have been identified as having) learning disabilities or difficulties? How have your formal education and professional development contributed to these decisions?
- 4) Can you describe an experience where you felt successful as an instructor and an experience where you felt unsuccessful as an instructor? In what ways have your preparation and professional development contributed to that success? In what ways has professional development fallen short of preparing you to address that challenge?
- 5) To what extent (use percentages) are instructional decisions informed by your background knowledge, available program materials, adult learning and development theory, research, and learner needs?
- 6) Please describe how your formal education informs your teaching practice. How did it prepare you for mastering content in the areas you teach? How did it prepare you to plan lessons, select curricula, and choose instructional strategies?

Professional Development

- 7) Describe your process for identifying and meeting your professional development needs. How do you determine when professional development has met your learning need?
- 8) Please describe professional development experiences that you have participated in as an adult literacy educator whether formal (such as classes or workshops), informal (exchanges with other teachers or professionals or professional networks), or personal. How have these formal, informal, and personal experiences impacted your teaching practice?
- 9) Which professional development experience has had the greatest impact on your instructional practice, and why?
- 10) Describe two or three things you have learned about research in the field of adult literacy education as a result of participating in professional development?
- 11) Reflecting on the professional development in which you have participated, which aspects or activities were most helpful in assisting you to gain a new perspective on teaching, helping you to understand the needs of learners, or providing techniques which you were able to use immediately? Which aspects contributed the least to your professional development in these areas?
- 12) Reflecting on the professional development in which you have participated, which aspects or activities were helpful in assisting you to gain access to instructional resources, incorporate technology into instruction, or improve instructional skills? Which aspects
- 13) What two to three things would you suggest to policy makers to strengthen the instructional skills of teachers? What subjects would you like professional development to cover, what delivery formats would you like to have available, what skills would you like to acquire?

APPENDIX F

State Director Informed Consent Form

CSU IRB#

Dear Jeff Gove,

My name is Carmine Stewart. I am a former ABLE instructor, and a current PhD student at Cleveland State University. I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation. My dissertation title is “Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy Education.” I am interested in learning about how teachers entered the field of adult literacy education, how teachers feel their formal education and professional development contribute to their knowledge about and skill in adult literacy instruction, and what literacy instructors might suggest to designers of professional development to support their stated learning needs.

I am asking ABLE instructors who currently teach within the ABLE system in Ohio, and who have at least one year of previous instructional experience with Ohio ABLE, to complete a brief survey.

The survey will ask questions about their educational backgrounds, the professional development they have received as ABLE employees, their comfort level with the literacy content that they are teaching, and their suggestions for what would aid in their professional development as teachers. Results from this survey can provide insight on how to best support instructors who have accepted the role of educating adults in our great state, and how to best structure professional development to help instructors improve their instructional practice.

The survey responses will remain anonymous. Participant names will not be collected, and associated program affiliation will not be revealed. In addition, results will be reported on the group of responders as a whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant consent), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote. For example, if a respondent says, “I’ve worked at Jupiter ABLE for six years and I struggle with the mathematics instruction,” I might report, “One respondent shared that mathematics instruction is a ‘struggle.’”

I would also like to work with a small group of teachers (co-researchers) who will meet once to participate in a focus group to validate findings from the statewide survey, and formulate a set of recommendations for professional development planners. Members of this group will take a brief, online basic skills assessment administered by CTB McGraw Hill. The individual results of this assessment will be anonymous however the average results of the group will be used to inform the focus group discussion. As with the survey, focus group responses will remain anonymous. In addition, results will be

reported on the group of responders as a whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant permission), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote.

Participation is completely voluntary and participants may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating. There are no foreseeable risks for participants outside of those associated with daily living. The benefits of the study might be that instructors examine their professional development needs and choices more closely as a result of participating. Data from the study will be stored in the office of Dr. Joanne Goodell, study Co-Chair and Methodologist, in Julka Hall, room 346. The data will be stored on password protected files.

There are two ways for instructors to participate:

- 1) As a survey respondent – Participants will take an anonymous e-mail survey.
- 2) As a focus group participant – Participants will take an anonymous e-mail survey and meet once for four hours to complete a brief basic skills assessment and engage in a discussion about their preparation, professional development, and instructional practice. Participants will generate theories about the experiences of adult educators, and develop a model for professional development based on conclusions drawn during their inquiry process.

For further information regarding this research please contact 1) Carmine Stewart at 216-262-3281, or at carmine0701@hotmail.com, 2) Dr. Jonathan Messemer at 216- 523-7132, or 3) Dr. Joanne Goodell at (216) 687-5426. If you have any questions about instructors' rights as research participants you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Thank you in advance for your support. Please print two copies of this letter. After signing them, please keep one copy for your records and return the other one to carmine0701@hotmail.com, or Carmine Stewart, 1905 Forest View Drive, Cleveland Heights, Ohio 44118. Please indicate your agreement to allow Ohio ABLE instructors to participate by signing below.

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to allow instructors within the Ohio ABLE system to participate. I understand that if I have any questions about instructors' rights as a research subjects I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Signature:

Title:

Printed Name:

Date:

APPENDIX G

ABLE Adult Literacy Instructor Informed Consent Form

CSU IRB#

Dear Adult Literacy Instructor,

My name is Carmine Stewart. I am a former ABLE instructor, and a current PhD student at Cleveland State University. I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation. My dissertation title is "Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy Education." I am interested in learning 1) how teachers entered the field of adult literacy education, 2) how teachers feel their formal education and professional development contribute to their knowledge about and skill in adult literacy instruction, and 3) what literacy instructors might suggest to designers of professional development to better support their learning needs.

I am asking ABLE instructors who currently teach within the ABLE system in Ohio, and who have at least one year of previous instructional experience with Ohio ABLE, to complete a brief survey. The survey will ask questions about your educational background, the professional development you have received as an ABLE employee, your comfort level with the literacy content that you are teaching, and your suggestions for what would aid in your professional development as a teacher. Results from this survey can provide insight on how to best support instructors who have accepted the role of educating adults in our great state, and how to best structure professional development to help instructors improve their instructional practice.

Your survey responses will remain anonymous. Participant names are not included on the survey, and associated program affiliation will not be revealed. In addition, results will be reported on the group of responders as a whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant consent), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote. For example, if a respondent says, "I've worked at Jupiter ABLE for six years and I struggle with the mathematics instruction," I might report, "One respondent shared that mathematics instruction is a 'struggle.'"

I would also like to work with a small group of teachers (co-researchers) who will meet once to participate in a focus group to validate findings from the statewide survey, and formulate a set of recommendations for professional development planners. Members of this group will take a brief, online basic skills assessment administered by CTB McGraw-Hill. The individual results of this assessment will be anonymous however the average results of the group will be used to inform the focus group discussion. As with the survey, focus group responses will remain anonymous. In addition, results will be reported on the group of responders as a whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant consent), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no

reward for participating or consequence for not participating. There are no foreseeable risks for you outside of those of your daily living should you choose to participate in the study. The benefits might be that you examine your professional development needs more closely as a result of participating. Data from the study will be stored in the office of Dr. Joanne Goodell, study Co-Chair and Methodologist, in Julka Hall, room 346. The data will be stored on password protected files.

There are two ways to participate:

- 1) As a survey respondent – Participants will take an anonymous e-mail survey.
- 2) As a focus group participant – Participants will take an anonymous e-mail survey, and meet once for four hours to complete a brief basic skills assessment administered by CTB McGraw Hill and engage in a discussion about preparation, professional development, and instructional practice in adult literacy education. Participants will generate theories about the experiences of-adult educators, and develop a model for professional development based on conclusions drawn during their inquiry process.

For further information regarding this research please contact 1) Carmine Stewart at 216-262-3281, or at carmine0701@hotmail.com, 2) Dr. Jonathan Messemer at 216- 523-7132, or 3) Dr. Joanne Goodell at (216) 687-5426. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Thank you in advance for your participation and support. Please print a copy of this letter for your records. By clicking the link to access the survey, you are providing: 1) your consent to participate in this study, 2) your consent for the researcher to use your responses in the study, 3) your agreement with the following statement:

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form, and I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Signature:

Title:

Printed Name:

Date:

APPENDIX H
Informed Consent Form
CSU IRB#

Dear Adult Literacy Instructor,

My name is Carmine Stewart. I am a former adult literacy instructor, and a current PhD student at Cleveland State University. I am in the process of conducting research for my dissertation. My dissertation title is “Teacher Preparation and Professional Development in Adult Literacy Education.” I am interested in learning 1) how teachers entered the field of adult literacy education, 2) how teachers feel their formal education and professional development contribute to their knowledge about and skill in adult literacy instruction, and 3) what literacy instructors might suggest to designers of professional development to better support their learning needs. I am asking instructors who currently teach in Ohio, and who have at least one year of previous instructional experience, to assist me in this research by: 1) completing a brief survey, taking a short basic skills assessment, and participating in a focus group.

The survey will ask questions about your educational background, the professional development you have received as an adult literacy instructor, your comfort level with the literacy content that you are teaching, and your suggestions for what would aid in your professional development as a teacher. Results from this survey can provide insight on how to best support instructors who have accepted the role of educating adults in our great state, and how to best structure professional development to help instructors improve their instructional practice. Your survey responses will be kept confidential. Participant names and associated program affiliation will not be revealed. In addition, results will be reported on the group of responders as a whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant consent), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote. For example, if a respondent says, “I’ve worked at Jupiter Literacy for six years and I struggle with the mathematics instruction,” I might report, “One respondent shared that mathematics instruction is a ‘struggle.’”

For the focus group, instructors will meet once to participate in a focus group to validate findings from the statewide survey, and formulate a set of recommendations for professional development planners. Members of this group will take a brief, online basic skills assessment administered by CTB McGraw Hill. The individual results of this assessment will be anonymous however the average results of the group will be used to inform the focus group discussion. As with the survey, focus group responses will remain anonymous. In addition, results will be reported on the group of responders as a

whole. Quotes may be used to support research findings (with participant consent), but no information that might help identify the responder will be included in that quote.

Participation is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. There is no reward for participating or consequence for not participating. There are no foreseeable risks for you outside of those of your daily living should you choose to participate in the study. The benefits might be that you examine your professional development needs more closely as a result of participating. Data from the study will be stored in the office of Dr. Joanne Goodell, study Co-Chair and Methodologist, in Julka Hall, room 346. The data will be stored on password protected files.

For further information regarding this research please contact 1) Carmine Stewart at 216-262-3281, or at carmine0701@hotmail.com, 2) Dr. Jonathan Messemer at 216- 523-7132, or 3) Dr. Joanne Goodell at (216) 687-5426. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant you may contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Thank you in advance for your participation and support. Please print two copies of this letter. After signing them, please keep one copy for your records and return the other one.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by checking the following statement and signing below.

_____ I agree to participate in the survey and in the focus group.

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate. I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research subject I can contact the CSU Institutional Review Board at (216) 687-3630.

Signature:

Printed Name:

Date: