5-22-2001

A Study of Teachers' Espoused Instructional Beliefs

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A STUDY OF TEACHERS' ESPOUSED INSTRUCTIONAL BELIEFS

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

by

Lauren Sherrill Gach

2001

To: Dean Linda Blanton
        College of Education

This dissertation, written by Lauren Sherrill Gach, and entitled A Study of Teachers'
Espoused Instructional Beliefs, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual
content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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Abbas Tashakkori

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Date of Defense: May 22, 2001

The dissertation of Lauren Sherrill Gach is approved.

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Dean Linda Blanton
College of Education

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Dean Douglas Wartzok
Division of Graduate Studies

Florida International University, 2001

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Tony, who has encouraged, supported, and cheered me on throughout this long and arduous process; my daughters, Jessie and Alyssa, whose favorite phrase has become, "Are you still working on that thing?"; and my family, friends, and coworkers, who are still trying to understand why I felt the need to undertake such an endeavor.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Professor Stephen Fain and Professor Judith Slater, Co-Major Professors

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' espoused instructional beliefs and whether they differed in relation to schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. The study comprised a total of 242 Miami-Dade County public school educators who responded to a thirty-nine question Likert scale, *Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire*. Eighteen schools, three from each of the six regions, were purposively selected based on the socioeconomic status of students. Nine participants were interviewed using semi-standardized interview procedures and open-ended questioning techniques.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) results revealed that teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy and forces and influences affecting instruction do not significantly differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. The majority of teachers appear to follow a top-down generated direct instruction model. Generally, students are taught as a whole class and ability grouped for specific skill instruction utilizing commercially produced reading and language arts texts.

There was no evidence of a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction that they practice or teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice and the three independent variables. Interview data corroborated much of the information garnered through the questionnaire. However, interview participants espoused the belief that research did not influence their selection of instructional practices.

Although teachers perceive of themselves as eclectic in their espoused instructional beliefs, they appear to follow a skills based direct instruction pedagogy in practice. Much of what teachers believe constitutes effective practice, few researchers recommend, affirming the findings of Calderhead (1993) and the National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board (U.S. Department of Education, 1998, p. 18) that "educators rarely know research, seek it out, or act in accordance with its results."

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Elementary school teachers are daily faced with the need to make complex

decisions concerning instruction. They are constantly looking for answers to specific

instructional problems or attempting to find an approach that will work for a particular

child or group of children. Frequently, they rely on the teacher's manuals that

accompany the adopted reading series or sets of supplementary materials (Chall, 1996).

They may consult the curriculum guides developed and provided by the school district or

discuss their concerns with peers or supervisory and support staff. The one source of

information most educators do not consult is the research literature (McCutcheon, 1992;

Weaver, 1980).

Although educational research has demonstrated that it can provide useful

information to inform educational practice and policy, the relationship between research

and practice has been a troubled one (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). The field of

education lacks a tradition of mutual accountability between research and practice.

Teachers do not rely on research to develop fuller conceptualizations of their work

(Calderhead, 1993). Educators rarely know research, seek it out, or act in accordance

with its results (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). Practitioners often feel that

research activity is so far removed from the classroom that it will not help them solve

their immediate instructional problems especially in the area of literacy (Chall, 1996).

Yet, since the turn of the century, more research has been done in the field of literacy

than any other curricular area (Chall, 1996; Weaver, 1980).

What research has revealed about literacy instruction should inform how educators go about providing effective literacy experiences and instruction for students (Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, & Pressley, 1999). The teaching of literacy should be based upon research evidence characterized by rigorous methodology and the "convergence of studies demonstrated to be representative, reliable, and valid" (Lyon, 1998, p. 128). Research knowledge employed to guide practice must inform educators how different components of reading behavior are best developed through the utilization of various approaches to literacy instruction (Lyon, 1998). It is felt that the "reading wars," or rift which has developed during the last decade within literacy methodology and practice, will "only be resolved" when educators, legislators, and parents listen to researchers and experts (Flippo, 1999).

Chall's original study, published in *Learning to Read: The Great Debate* (1967), found evidence that although numerous studies concerning literacy existed, surveys of how students were being taught were virtually nonexistent. She concluded from the few surveys that could be found that the majority of literacy teachers relied on published reading programs and the accompanying teacher's manual. These supplied a built-in method for teachers to follow, rather than research on effective literacy practice. Often, the observed teacher practices violated the "theoretical position of the program's author(s)" (Chall, 1996, p. 285).

There is a consensus that research should inform instruction (Goodman, 1998; Gunderson, 1997). Teachers should be knowledgeable professionals guided by both theory and research (Gunderson, 1997). Yet, the assumption has been made that teachers rarely turn to research literature in developing effective literacy programs (Westwood,

Knight, & Redden, 1997). Instead, teachers' personal beliefs about the nature of the reading process and how children actually acquire literacy skills tend to significantly influence their choice of instructional methods and materials (Westwood et al., 1997). Research literature has also purported that state mandates, district curriculum frameworks, and teachers' perceptions of "what works" based on their education and experience in the varied classroom environments in which they instruct are all influential in teachers' instructional decision making.

Few studies were found in the research literature in which an attempt had been made to ascertain the espoused beliefs of teachers concerning the instruction of literacy. Studies exist which have correlated teachers' perceptions to instructional models of reading or measured changes in teachers' instructional beliefs following training workshops (DeFord, 1985; Westwood et al., 1997). Overall, the studies that were found concluded that there is a dominant instructional model utilized by teachers regardless of their educational background, teaching experience, or the socioeconomic status of the schools in which they taught. Most teachers in the classroom adhere to a direct instruction skills based model (Anyon, 1981; Chall, 1996; Griffin, 1986).

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. It attempted to determine whether teachers' espoused instructional beliefs were likely to differ depending on the socioeconomic status of the schools in which they taught, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Another intent of the study was to determine if a significant relationship existed between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction that they practice, espoused beliefs concerning research and its application

to practice, and the three independent variables. Based on the body of research, it was hypothesized that teachers' espoused instructional beliefs would not significantly differ. Further it was hypothesized that results from the surveyed sample would reveal that teachers seldom rely on research to determine effective literacy practices utilized in the classroom environment. Although recent research has recommended an eclectic use of several instructional models in the teaching of literacy, it was hypothesized that questionnaire results would reveal a dominant model utilized by teachers, regardless of the socioeconomic status of schools in which they taught, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of their classroom experience.

The research questions investigated in this study attempted to find out what teachers' espoused instructional beliefs were concerning literacy and whether they were likely to differ depending on their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Another purpose was to determine teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which may affect instruction and whether they were likely to differ depending on their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. The study was also designed to determine whether a relationship existed between teachers' espoused instructional model of literacy or teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice and their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of educational background, or extent of classroom experience.

Historically, scholars and researchers have emerged in the curriculum field with their own diverse definitions and solutions to address problems in curriculum and

instruction. This study was designed to include educators in the dialogue, recognizing that inquiry cannot be separated from those who are directly affected by curricular policy and decision making. To involve practitioners implies a true "community of inquiry" necessary for the improvement of curriculum and instruction (Shubert, 1986). The curricular area of literacy was selected specifically due to its multifaceted characteristics and application to other subject areas that encompass the study of curriculum and instruction.

Background of the Problem

The question of how best to teach reading may be the most politicized topic in the field of education. (Adams, 1990, p. 59)

Sociological Issues

With the publication of *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) followed by the *National Assessment of Educational Progress Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States* (Campbell, Donahue, Reese, & Phillips, 1996), the general public has been led to believe that their children have not been taught to read properly (Flippo, 1999). As governor of Texas, our current president, George W. Bush, proclaimed the goal of "making every child" in public school a reader (Coles, 2000). As part of his 1996 reelection strategy, former President Clinton promised to have every child a reader by the age of eight (Goodman, 1998). The following year, the House Education and Workforce Committee held hearings throughout the United States ostensibly on the subject of "what works" in literacy instruction (Goodman, 1998, p. 28). Various "experts" giving testimony stated that a virtual crisis existed in the

country related to the number of children considered illiterate by "research standards" (Goodman, 1998, p. 29). It was their recommendation that "scientific research-based" programs should be disseminated and taught to education practitioners to facilitate effective literacy instruction and student achievement throughout the United States (Goodman, 1998, p. 29).

In recent years, research on literacy instruction has attempted to address specific questions about the efficacy of techniques and procedures (Chall, 1996; Gambrell et al., 1999). The 1950s (Flesch, 1955) and 1960s (Chall, 1967) controversy about whether literacy instruction ought to involve phonics or a look-say approach has evolved into the contemporary phonics versus whole language debate. The literature often refers to this controversy as the "reading wars" (Goodman, 1998). Consequently, reading professionals, practitioners, and more recently, politicians have imposed an "…unattainable standard of always searching for the single best method, process, or approach to literacy development" (Kameenui, 1998, p. 10). Adams (1990) warned that there could be no "best" method in the teaching of literacy because effectiveness "depends too much on the details of how it is implemented" (Adams, 1990, p. 123). It is not a matter of teachers "doing whatever they want" but rather knowing many methods and materials that can be applied in any given situation (Kameenui, 1998, p. 9).

Education appears to move from "fad to fad" with little effect on student outcome (Duffy & Roehler, 1991, p. 866). Slavin and Fashola (1998) described this as a metaphor resembling a change in fashion, "Hemlines go up and down according to popular tastes, not evidence" (p. 6). Shanahan and Neuman (1997) posited that many of the changes that have occurred in literacy instruction have been due less to research then other economic,

political, and social factors. They cite no existing research antecedent to substantiate

teachers' use of an eclectic literacy instructional approach (Shanahan & Neuman, 1997).

Existing surveys indicate that the majority of practitioners use a dominant literacy

instructional model rather than several models as recommended by current research

(Chall, 1996).

Theoretical Issues

Traditionally, the theoretical model for developing a "productive" relationship

between research and educational practice has been referred to as the Research-

Development-Dissemination-Evaluation (RDDE) model (U. S. Department of Education,

1998, p. 38). Researchers typically have taken the responsibility for producing new

knowledge that relates to some aspect of learning, pedagogy, or schooling. They

disseminated that knowledge through traditional academic venues of journals, scholarly

papers, and meetings. Education practitioners have assumed the responsibility for

designing and implementing instructional products and programs. Sometimes these are

based on research data, but more often experience and intuition are utilized in response to

specific problems in the educational environment (U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

Although educational research has demonstrated that it can provide useful

answers for educational practice and policymaking, the relationship between research and

practice has been a troubled one (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). The field of

education lacks a tradition of mutual accountability between research and practice.

Decisions concerning practices and instruction are often based on teachers' own

experiences and common sense rather then the views of experts and research findings

(Perry-Sheldon & Allain, 1987). Studies have found that teachers rarely seek advice

from resource personnel, perceiving that experts will be of little help (Perry-Sheldon & Allain, 1987). Classroom teachers often regard research as an "esoteric activity" having little to do with daily concerns (Börg, 1987). The perception has been noted that research activity is so far removed from the classroom that it will not help solve immediate instructional problems (U.S. Department of Education, 1998; Weaver, 1980).

Researchers traditionally have been reluctant to speculate about the educational implications of their work. Instead, the work they do often results in the need for further research (Weaver, 1980). With successive refinements of the research, the results tend to get less and less generalizable and less practical. The size of the units of analysis in laboratory-based research is quite different from those of the classroom. Classroom teachers operate in a relatively uncontrolled environment rather than the controlled environment in which much of experimental research takes place. Thus, research results have often been difficult to apply (Börg, 1987; Coles, 2000; U. S. Department of Education, 1998; Weaver, 1980).

The jargon, methodologies, and concerns of researchers and educators are often coupled with an inadequate exchange of information. Most educational practitioners do not read the variety of journals in which research can be found or attend the annual meetings where research and scholarly papers are presented (U.S. Department of Education, 1998; Weaver, 1980). Often data is presented in a manner that is both difficult to comprehend or apply to practice in the classroom environment. The development of further understanding of teachers' perceptions of research and its implementation in the classroom setting may be dependent on recognizing the complexity

and diversity of both research and practice and acknowledging that the relationship between the two is interactive and multifaceted (Calderhead, 1993).

<u>Pedagogical Issues</u>

Stahl (1997) reviewed much of the literacy instruction research compiled since 1925, dividing competing approaches into four general categories: direct instruction, explicit instruction, cognitive apprenticeship, and authentic language instruction. Direct instruction was based on behavioral roots. It assumed that reading and language could be decomposed into identifiable subskills. Each component was taught until mastered, using contingency management (Stahl, 1997). Scope and sequence charts were used to divide the reading process into a sequenced series of skills and subskills. Up to 75% of "reading" time was spent on workbook practice. Instruction was highly teacher directed. Acquisition of literacy was viewed as "highly unnatural" requiring systematic instruction (Stahl, 1997, p. 3).

Explicit instruction was similar to direct instruction but had a greater emphasis on practicing the strategy in the context of the reading text. Emphasis was placed on leading students to make a transference using strategies taught. This was developed through the teaching of specific reading comprehension strategies in a manner that would transfer to general reading skills (Stahl, 1997).

In the cognitive apprenticeship approach, the teacher's role was to scaffold the students' learning. The teacher modeled processes of comprehension using small groups instead of a teacher-dominated class structure. Cognitive apprenticeship models are based on two essential beliefs (Stahl, 1997). The first is that skilled reading involves complex interaction between readers, strategies, knowledge, and information presented in

text. The second belief is that similar to whole language, the task of reading is viewed as holistic, stressing the "higher levels" of thinking (Stahl, 1997). Social interaction was used as the model for obtaining effective comprehension.

In the final approach cited by Stahl (1997), language was used for authentic purposes. Reading was viewed as a problem solving experience. The whole language approach involved using authentic reading and writing tasks and whole texts. Artificial tasks, such as worksheets or especially adapted stories found in basal reading programs, were de-emphasized. Essentially a child-centered approach, activities such as choral reading, Big Books, and process writing were modeled and emphasized.

Fox (1996) stated that different methods of teaching literacy share the same foundation – "a cognitive view of learning to be literate" (Fox, 1996, p. 272). None of the models discussed by Stahl (1997) is "best." Each approach has a place in developing an effective literacy instruction program (Stahl, 1997). The determination and amalgamation of instructional models should depend on which aspects of literacy are being emphasized in the classroom setting and the students' needs as learners, rather than picking one "best" approach to use throughout the literacy curriculum (Stahl, 1997).

Statement of the Problem

The sociological, theoretical, and pedagogical background of the problem suggests areas that need to be addressed. According to government mandate and policies, it is necessary to improve literacy achievement in the United States. Recommendations have been made that "scientific research-based" programs should be implemented to facilitate effective literacy instruction (Goodman, 1998, p. 29). In order to improve

student achievement in literacy, researchers need to understand what teachers do in the classroom instructional environment, teachers' perceptions of research, and how teachers' perceptions are reflected in their practice. Although much has been politicized concerning the "best" approach and practice to the instruction of literacy, recent research has determined that teachers may be eclectic in their literacy practices (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998). This study will attempt to determine whether teachers' espoused beliefs concerning literacy practices differ depending on the extent of participant's educational training, extent of their classroom experience, and their schools' socioeconomic status. A further issue is whether teachers' espoused beliefs reflect recommended instructional practice as reported in the research literature.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. The study was also designed to ascertain whether there was a difference in teachers' espoused instructional beliefs depending on their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. The study was an attempt to investigate whether a relationship existed between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning their model of instructional practice, research and its application to practice, and the three independent variables. Through interviews, the researcher hoped to clarify and corroborate data collected from the surveyed sample.

Although numerous studies have been conducted in the literacy area, little research exists as to what teachers actually do in their classrooms (Chall, 1996). The development of further understanding of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs and how

they are applied in the classroom setting is important in guiding future research

endeavors. Researchers and practitioners must recognize the complexity and diversity of

both research and practice and acknowledge this relationship as interactive and

multifaceted (Calderhead, 1993).

Research and Subsidiary Questions

The research question to be examined in this study is "What are teachers'

espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy?" The subsidiary research

questions are:

1. Are teachers' espoused instructional beliefs likely to differ depending on schools'

socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers'

classroom experience?

2. Are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction

likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers'

educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

3. Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused model of literacy instruction that

they practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational

background, and extent of teachers' classroom experience?

4. Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its

application to practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational

background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

 5. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the acquisition and instruction of

literacy?

6. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction?

7. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction that they practice?

8. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice?

Assumptions of the Study

The following are accepted as basic assumptions of the study.

1. The eighteen schools selected to participate in the purposive sample used in the study were no different in the demographic composition of their student population than was the norm for elementary schools in Miami-Dade County, Florida during the 2000-2001 school year.

2. The eighteen schools selected to participate in the purposive sample used in the study were no different in students' socioeconomic status than was the norm for elementary schools in Miami-Dade County, Florida during the 2000-2001 school year.

3. Characteristics of faculty from the eighteen Miami-Dade County Public schools which participated in the purposive sample used in the study were no different from characteristics of faculty from Miami-Dade County Public schools which did not participate in the study during the 2000-2001 school year.

Limitations of the Study

The study was subject to the following limitations.

1. The eighteen Miami-Dade County schools selected to participate in the purposive

sample used in the study represent intact groups. This may limit the generalizability of the study's results.

2. Survey research is susceptible to social desirability bias. Participants may respond to questionnaire items in a manner that reflects their "perceptions of educational norms rather than their own beliefs" (Baumann, Hoffman, Duffy-Hester, & Ro, 2000).

3. Researcher bias effect is a reality of educational research studies. The researcher's previous experiences and knowledge may affect interpretation of available research literature and analyses of qualitative data (Berg, 1998).

Terms

Comprehensive Reading Plan

The Miami-Dade Public Schools Comprehensive Reading Plan was designed to implement "the developmental, accelerated, and preventive reading program" requirements that would ensure that students could read on grade level before entering Grade 3 (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. iv). The program was also devised to diagnose and accelerate the reading performance of all students. Included in the plan are "standards, strategies, benchmarks, and assessments" (Miami Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. iv).

Effective Teaching

Griffin (1991) discussed outstanding teaching as "truly and deeply intellectual" in nature (p. 124). Good teaching is decision making, determining from a variety of options what is best for students (Shulman, 1988). Research on effective teaching during the last two decades concluded that students learn more if teachers expect them to learn,

focus on content to be covered, keep them on task, provide adequate practice, monitor

their performance, or care about whether they succeed (Oliva, 1997). The ultimate

criterion of teacher effectiveness must be based on changes in pupils' behavior.

Espoused Theories

When a teacher is asked how she/he would behave under certain circumstances,

the answer often given is their espoused theory or theory-in-use. Argyris and Schön

(1974) wrote that espoused theories are those to which one gives their "allegiance" and

communicates to others. Teachers' espoused theories may or may not be compatible with

their theories-of-action. Learning to put a theory-of-use into actual practice is similar to

learning a skill (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Dilemmas occur from incongruities which

arise from espoused theories and theories-in-action. Hopefully, dilemmas of constancy

and effectiveness will bring about changes in a person's "governing variables" of theory-

in-use (p. 34). Eventually, a fair level of congruence will be developed in that one's

espoused theories match those of their theories-in-action. The positive result of teachers'

theories-in-use is that students become the beneficiary to practices polished by

experience (Duffy, 1997). The negative result is that teaching becomes routine and

repetitive.

Teaching Model

Joyce, Weil, and Showers (1992) stated, "a model for teaching is a plan or

pattern that can be used to shape curriculum to design instructional materials, and to

guide instruction in the classroom and other settings" (p. 1). In all, sixteen models of

instruction were grouped under four categories: social, information processing, personal,

and behavioral. Teachers should be masters of several models of teaching (Joyce et al., 1992).

Teaching Strategy

Smith (1987) defined teaching strategies as patterns of acts, which serve to attain certain outcomes while guarding against certain others. A strategy should be directed to ensure certain learning be acquired in as brief a time as possible. Strategies should induce students to engage in an exchange of ideas. Last, strategies should minimize the number of wrong responses as students attempt to learn the concepts being taught.

Significance of the Study

Presently, little information exists as to teachers' espoused beliefs and how they compare to the research on effective literacy instruction. If researchers are to continue to amass a body of information in the literacy field it is important that this data is useful and relevant to the practitioner (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Are educators turning to literacy research to develop successful instructional programs in the classroom? If not, it becomes imperative for researchers to re-evaluate their methodology and methods of dissemination currently in use in order that those for whom research is intended to provide answers for do indeed receive, understand, and use it to inform practice (Gunderson, 1997).

Summary of the Chapter

Chapter one presented a brief overview of the study along with the background and significance of the problem and a problem statement. Several terms used in a manner specific to this study and/or the work of the researcher are defined, and assumptions and

limitations of the particular undertaking are listed. Chapter one also contained the

research question and subsidiary questions.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter two discusses the body of research literature available concerning

teachers' decision making processes, literacy instructional models, effective literacy

instructional practices, and the relationship between research and instruction during the

last decade. Chapter three describes the design and methodology used in creating the

survey and collecting data from the study sample. Chapter four analyzes the

questionnaire and transcribed interview data to determine whether a relationship exists

between the independent and dependent variables. Chapter five presents the

interpretation and discussion of the study's findings and the implications for further

research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

It is the purpose of this chapter to review literature relevant to understanding the congruency between teachers' espoused instructional beliefs and the research on effective instruction. What factors and behaviors determine how teachers make instructional decisions? What models of literacy instruction do teachers utilize in determining effective literacy instructional strategies and practices? Has previous research demonstrated a relationship between the extent of teachers' classroom experience, extent of teacher's educational background, or schools' socioeconomic status, and teachers' espoused instructional beliefs? Historically, what has been the relationship between research and practice?

Teacher Knowledge and Decision Making

Much of a teacher's professional "craft" knowledge is tacit. It is acquired over time through experience and applied without "thinking" (Batten, Muland, & Khames, 1993, p. 3). Argyris and Schön (1974) stated that teachers know more than they can verbalize or realize, more than their behavior demonstrates. They discussed theories of action as those theories that explain one's actions (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Theories of action serve to explain or predict actual observed behavior (Argyris & Schön, 1974). They exist even when teachers can't explicitly state them.

When a teacher is asked how she/he would behave under certain circumstances, the answer often given is their espoused theory or theory-in-use. Argyris and Schön (1974) wrote that espoused theories are those to which one gives their "allegiance" and communicates to others (p. 33). Teachers' espoused theories may or may not be

compatible with their theories of action. Dilemmas occur from incongruities which arise from espoused theories and theories of action. Hopefully, dilemmas of constancy and effectiveness will bring about changes in a person's "governing variables" of theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 34). Eventually, a fair level of congruence will be developed in that one's espoused theories match those of their theories of action.

What teachers do cognitively when they think about their actions is different from what they do when they act (Duffy, 1997). Skillful teachers act in ways that allow their own learning to occur from each situation. They approach situations and problems as occasions for creating and interpreting knowledge about their own professional practices (Argyris, 1982). Argyris (1982) argued that professionals could design and manage their "unawareness." The measures they take should be designed to set up mental connections between a novel situation in which their unawareness presents itself and the dominant professional idea or model they follow and normally use. This kind of functioning allows deficiencies in knowledge to "come to the forefront of their thinking" (Argyris, 1982, p. 53). Thus, specific gaps are identified in the knowledge base so people can attend to and "close" them.

Argyris and Schön (1974) concluded that it is necessary "to practice, to develop, and draw on tacit knowledge" (p. 15). It is important for practitioners to be placed in learning situations that permit a reinforcing cycle for the aforementioned components to occur. "Single loop" learning experiences "maintain the field of constancy" with little opportunity to examine behaviors or theories in action (p. 19). The positive result is that students become the beneficiary to practices polished by experience (Duffy, 1997). The negative result is that teaching becomes routine and repetitive.

"Double loop" learning opportunities evolve as a result of an awareness of the incongruities in one's theories of action and espoused theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Gradual changes in practitioners' behaviors and practices will occur based on realizations gained through open examination of one's practices or theories of action. It is further suggested that research venues be designed with "double-loop" behavioral experiences in mind. This would entail the participation and involvement of practitioners and researchers through ongoing dialogue and collaborative efforts.

Chin and Benne (1989) discussed the normative re-educative change strategy as one which essentially involves "double-loop" learning experiences. Similar to Argyris and Schön (1974), change in a pattern of practice occurs only when those involved are convinced to change their normative orientations. Chin and Benne (1989) contended that attitudes and skills need to be altered utilizing more then just the strategy of dissemination of knowledge, information, or intellectual rationales. Collaborative efforts must be made by educational researchers and curriculum professionals to help practitioners determine how and why they might want to modify their instructional strategies and practice (Grant, 1998).

Schön (1983) asserted that effective teachers engage in decision making by using reflective and analytic skills. They apply their understanding of theories and past experience to curriculum and instruction. Effective teachers test out theories-in-use against their hypotheses about learning (Schön, 1983). They know in advance much of what might happen in a given learning situation. Effective teachers have ways of explaining what happened and why. After the situation has passed, they can often predict the next situation.

How teachers think and act is conditioned by their circumstances (Duffy, 1997). Whatever model and dominant epistemology of teaching is held is shaped by the "way things are" and the pressures exerted which will direct their practice (p. 47). Teachers exhibit a tendency to do what is satisfying by strengthening ways of getting desirable results or extinguishing those behaviors that are "punishing" (Dennett, 1995). Duffy (1997) posited that teachers deal with situations without "highly detailed prescriptions" (p. 352). The general designs they do use are sufficient to suggest strategies for confronting particular contingencies.

A large number of teachers possessing the theoretical knowledge that is required during their initial training period do not appear to use this knowledge in practice (Börger & Tilleman, 1993). Research points to a distinction between trained pedagogical and didactical knowledge and professional acting in classroom situations. The cause has been identified as teachers' lack of knowledge about how learned theories should be brought into action (Börger & Tilleman, 1993). Thus, a transfer problem occurs between theoretical knowledge and application to relevant practice situations.

Brown and McIntyre (1989) initiated a study to make sense of the behaviors that experienced teachers demonstrated routinely in their classrooms. Practitioners were observed teaching a unit of study of their choice. They were then interviewed as to those aspects of their performance that were "pleasing" to them (p. 4). The results found that most teachers had common goals. They strove for a "good and easy" relationship between themselves and their pupils (p. 5). They desired that their students gain an understanding of what the teacher is asking them to do. Teachers wanted reluctant pupils to work and all students to apply themselves. They also expressed the desire for pupils to

be involved in self-reflection (Brown & McIntyre, 1989, p. 72). Batten, Muland, and Khames (1993) conducted a study utilizing comparable methods and derived similar conclusions.

In 1997, Haynes concluded a study of teacher thinking. Novice teachers appeared to operate on the basis of their cultural knowledge that was acquired from their own experiences as a student (Haynes, 1997). This knowledge eventually gave way to practical knowledge shaped by the classroom situations in which beginning teachers were placed. The context of the school, community, and society call for a certain way of thinking and acting within the classroom environment (Liston & Zeichner, 1991). These contexts create pressures to conform to norms of language practice and institutional operations. Thus, the options for teacher thinking and acting in alternative ways appear limited (Zeichner & Gore, 1990).

Acquisition of Literacy and Models of Literacy Instruction

The traditional definition of literacy offered by Gallagher, Goudvis, and Pearson (1988) is the "application of an individual of a set of skills for encoding or decoding any written text" (p. 24). Hollingsworth and Gallego (1996) wrote that literacy has a variety of definitions. They view literacy for those of elementary through college age as the "ability to read, write, and speak standard English" (p. 266). Goodman, Harste, and Smith (1987) observed that literacy should be viewed as "any use of print in which a person predicts with cues" (p. 56). These cues can be classified as graphic, orthographic, syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic processes. All are simultaneously present, interactive, and interdependent.

Greenwood and Parkay (1989) found that most teachers based their literacy instructional decisions on their own personal belief systems. These systems are influenced by educational research and theory in "varying degrees" (p. 5). Westwood, Knight, and Redden (1997) further studied this concept by developing a questionnaire designed to assess teachers' beliefs about early literacy learning and teaching. They concluded from their research that three predominant models of literacy acquisition presented in university teacher education programs influenced teachers' beliefs and practices. These were referred to as the "bottom-up," "top-down," and interactionist models (Westwood et al., 1997).

The "bottom-up" view assumes that the process of reading involves a series of transformations that move from a lower level (print) to an upper level (meaning). Gove (1983) considered the approach "pupil centered." Teacher emphasis in instruction is placed on careful and explicit attention to phonological, grapho-phonic knowledge, and sound blending. Students learn to read letters, letter clusters, words, sentences, paragraphs, and finally a selection (Gove, 1983).

In the "bottom-up" approach, the teaching of sounds, letters, and words is combined with the teaching of reading for meaning. Specifically designed reading materials are used with careful control of sentence length, regular spelling patterns, and repetition of key words and phrases. All children move through the same learning sequence. There is a substantial body of research that supports this teaching method (Adams, 1990; Pressley, Rankin, & Yokoi, 1996).

The most "prevalent" model used to instruct literacy in the past fifteen years, according to Westwood et al. (1997), is the "top-down." The "top-down" model is

considered content centered (Gove, 1983). Literacy instruction is based on the belief that

the reader uses syntactic and semantic cues to unlock text messages. Reading for

meaning is an essential basis for instruction in literacy. Teachers should instruct reading,

writing, listening, and speaking through meaningful activities (Gove, 1983).

Often, the "top-down" literacy model has been referred to as the "whole

language" approach. Literacy skills are best developed through functional use. Real

books and literature-based programs are utilized rather than vocabulary controlled texts.

Cooperative and collaborative methodology are emphasized along with the conference

process approach to writing (Taylor, 1998).

The third literacy instructional model discussed by Westwood et al. (1997) is

referred to as the interactionist model. Originally proposed by Stanovich (1994), it

emphasizes that a variety of sources of knowledge are used simultaneously during the

reading process. This includes semantic, syntactic, orthographic, and pragmatic sources.

Utilized according to need the interactionist model is actually a combination of the top

down and bottom up model (Westwood et al., 1997). However, both the "top- down" and

"bottom-up" instructional models are considered "serial stage models" (Gove, 1983). In

the interactionist model semantic, syntactic, and print are processed simultaneously.

Hurst (1999) discussed two basic approaches that teachers often utilized in the

instruction of literacy. The traditional approach involved a method that relied heavily on

"teacher directed instruction usually in conjunction with basal reader textbooks" (Reutzel

& Cooter, 1992, p. 3). The basal was the most widely used approach for literacy

development in the United States (Ruddell & Ruddell, 1995). The philosophy of the

approach centered around the idea that literacy instruction needs to be systemic involving

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a sequence of skills, which are taught through the offering of reading selections. This was followed by practice activities. The success of this method has been shown on "standardized tests, competency tests, and other measure of reading achievement" (Reutzel & Cooter, 1992, p. 3).

The second approach Hurst (1999) referred to was literature-based instruction. Teachers used children's literature as the basis for teaching students to read and to enjoy reading (Hurst, 1999). Attempts were made to integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing across all curriculum areas (Reutzel & Cooter, 1992). Teachers created integrated units of study with an emphasis on reading in context.

Duffy (1997) posited that instructional models should be viewed by effective literacy teachers as ideas to be adapted rather than tenets to be followed. Researchers have found that few teachers depart from traditional instruction (Chall, 1996; Duffy, 1997; Elmore & McLaughlin, 1988). Duffy (1997) cited reasons given as difficulty managing modern classrooms, teachers' previous educational training, and how they were taught to use instructional models.

In Duffy's longitudinal study, which focused on how teachers invent their own explanations, it was observed that many teachers appeared to decide what to do in their classrooms by referring to prescriptions from distant authority rather than by their own personal conceptions of literacy (Duffy, 1997). However, it was concluded that most teachers rejected the belief that their job was to follow authority. Rather, teachers embraced the concept that the best instruction was an "invention of their own minds" (p. 353). They invented life-like literacy experiences as a context for learning. They "created" their own instructional models, which were essentially adapted and

appropriately combined principles from several instructional models when needed (Duffy, 1997, p. 359).

Selection of Instructional Strategies and Practices

Oliva (1997) defined instructional strategy as encompassing methods, procedures, and techniques that teachers use to present subject matter to students to "bring about desired outcomes" (p. 364). Smith (1987) defined teaching strategies as a pattern of acts that serve to attain certain outcomes while guarding against certain others. A strategy should be directed to ensure certain learning be acquired in as brief a time as possible. Strategies should induce students to engage in an exchange of ideas. Last, strategies should minimize the number of wrong responses as students attempt to learn the concepts being taught (Smith, 1987).

Teachers vary enormously in practices that work for them in light of the problems confronted in their particular classrooms (Good, 1983). In order to choose from their vast repertoire, teachers must integrate large amounts of information about the students they interact with from a variety of sources. This information must be related to the teacher's own beliefs and goals, the nature of the instructional task, and the constraints of the classroom situation (Shavelson, 1983).

Subject matter provides a source of instructional strategies (Oliva, 1997). Current research highlights the critical influence of teachers' subject matter understanding on their pedagogical orientations and decisions. Their capacity to pose questions, select tasks, evaluate pupils' understanding, and make curricular choices all depend on how they themselves understand the subject matter (McDiarmid, Ball, & Anderson, 1989).

Teachers must determine principal facts, understandings, attitudes, appreciations, and skills to be mastered.

Strauss, Ravid, Zelcer and Berliner (1999) studied the nature of teachers' subject matter knowledge, their understanding of how children learn that subject matter, and how they both relate to the selection of instructional models and strategies. It was found that most teachers professed a basic belief that knowledge is possessed by the teacher, external from children's minds. For learning to occur the content must enter children's minds. Strauss et al. (1999) concluded that teachers believe that "good pedagogy" involves serving up knowledge in chunk sizes if the students are "capable," or reducing the complexity of the material so that children will be able to understand and link the material to previously existing knowledge (p. 263) . In the teacher's mind it becomes imperative to formally instruct skills and content material. Other research making this claim includes Brophy (1992).

Wragg, Wragg, Haynes, and Chamberlin (1998) concluded that teachers' selection of literacy practices and strategies appear to have their foundations in several areas. The framework provided by a school's reading policy plays an important part in decisions concerning instruction. The teacher's own experience of what types of approaches and materials worked well for them and their students is another integral factor in strategy selection. Specified instructional objectives may serve to limit strategy selection (Oliva, 1997). Additionally, the desires of parents and the type of community traditions and conventions often play an important role in strategy selection.

Teachers cited state mandates as influential in their selection of materials and practices (Wragg et al., 1998). Chin and Benne (1989) wrote about changes in

organizations brought about through what they defined as the power-coercive approach. This type of change strategy employed the use of economic and political sanctions. Grant (1998) concluded that legislative mandates serve as an example of the power-coercive approach. Allington and Wolmsley (1995) warned that classroom literacy instruction cannot be "significantly improved by issuing mandates or tightening the controls on classroom practices" (p. 261). Evidence suggests that "no amount of external pressure and controls" can make teachers more expert in the classroom environment (Allington & Wolmsley, 1995, p. 261). Furthermore, mandates and controls cause "ill will" and disempower teachers (Flippo, 1999).

Many legislatures across the United States have been inclined to pass laws that "force teachers and teacher educators to use a single instructional method" (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999, p. 11). The method suggested is usually prescriptive phonics. Consequently, school districts continue to adopt single packaged programs with the expectation that teachers will "follow." There exists a resistance to the belief that "one size does not fit all" (p. 12). This resistance is rooted in the presumption that teachers are "not very smart" and can't be trusted to handle the complexity requiring a prescriptive method or program (p. 14).

In 1998, Miami-Dade County committed itself to the "belief that every child should learn to read early" (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. iii). In its Comprehensive Reading Plan, the county stated "every child should read at grade level before entering Grade 3" (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. iii). The master plan for reading improvement included a district mandated survey test referred to as the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). It was designed for use in determining students'

reading levels. Unified district wide instructional strategies were to be adopted. Early intervention strategies were suggested. Mandated documentation of required independent reading was to be implemented.

Suggested effective teaching strategies were listed and discussed. Strategies emphasized teacher directed interactive reading of grade level materials. Reading and language arts skill lessons were to employ standards and objectives gleaned from the curricular frameworks mandated by the state and district. These included Miami-Dade County's Competency Based Curriculum and Florida's Sunshine State Standards. The aforementioned frameworks provide grade level competencies and objectives for all subject areas taught in Florida schools.

Guided reading was a mandated component of the Comprehensive Reading Plan with teachers providing instruction to small groups of students who had been assessed and grouped according to their independent reading levels. Practitioners were to use the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) scores for this purpose. Texts used with students should be those that offer readers a "minimum of new concepts" (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. v).

Structured independent reading time must be provided for all students on a daily basis. Students were to work with words, receiving daily "explicit systematic instruction" in phonics, word study, and vocabulary skills (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998, p. v). Suggested supportive language skill strategies included reciprocal teaching, questioning and discussing of text, reading and retelling, and learning to write. The Comprehensive Reading Plan mandated how strategies were to be carried out and

implemented in the classroom as well as a schedule of yearly assessment provided by the county and the state.

Effective Literacy Instruction

"Experts" appear to agree and understand well how to teach literacy to the vast majority of children (Honig, 2001, p. 13; Hyde, Daniels, & Zemelman, 1993, p. 24). Hyde et al. (1993) cited two major publications; *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985) and *New Policy Guidelines for Reading: Connecting Research and Practice* (Harste, 1989) as important in defining contemporary literacy instructional practices. According to Hyde et al.'s (1993) interpretation of the aforementioned reports, reading is a process of obtaining meaning from print. If reading is a meaning making process than the main goal of instruction should be comprehension.

Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) summarized the pedagogy of emergent literacy, prominent in much of the recent research. Essentially, children grow into reading and writing with "no real beginning or ending point" (p. 15). Reading and writing develop concurrently and interrelatedly with no "right" sequence. Prior knowledge and background are major elements in one's ability to develop and construct meaning. Comprehension is then the process of constructing meaning through relating ideas from text to prior knowledge and background experiences. Children develop their ability to construct meaning by having meaningful literacy experiences.

Gee (2000) wrote that "a discourse-based, situated, and sociocultural" view of literacy demands that we see it as many different socioculturally situated practices. Further, experiences must be provided for learners that are "normed and scaffolded" by

teachers and others who have been schooled in a variety of experiences (Gee, 2000, p. 204). This will ultimately build and lead students or "apprentices" to develop situated meanings based on shared experiences and shared cultural models.

Beginning reading instruction should provide children with many opportunities to interact with print. Hyde et al. (1993) concluded that the hearing of books read aloud is the beginning of learning to read. Therefore, time should be set aside daily for reading aloud to students. Strickland (1994) lauded the importance of reading aloud to children and allowing children to "actively participate" in the instructional process through discussion and sharing (p. 329). Questioning techniques utilizing predictive and analytic questions affected the children's vocabulary and comprehension development. Discussions about stories read and multiple re-readings decontextualized language within the selections.

An effective literacy program exposes students to a wide and rich array of print that goes beyond the use of the traditional basal textbook. Teachers should provide pre-reading, during reading, and after reading activities. "Before" activities should be designed to help students activate prior knowledge and aid in setting a purpose for reading. During reading, teachers need to help students monitor their comprehension and construct meaning. After reading, teachers must provide experiences in which students "savor, share, and reconstruct meaning" (Hyde et al., 1993, p. 31). These experiences build connections to further literacy experiences.

Hyde et al. (1993) concluded that the teaching of word analysis for meaning is necessary for successful literacy development. Even though teachers espouse beliefs that vocabulary learning should be "an expression of deep conceptual knowledge," classroom

instruction appears to be atomistic and skill based (Blachowicz & Fischer, 2000, p. 509).

Instruction consists of using new words in context and paraphrasing sentences containing

new words. Many teachers still depend on commercial programs.

Templeton and Morris (2000) summarized the most recent research on the

teaching of spelling and phonemic patterns. "Invented" spelling is considered a

"powerful" tool in encouraging students to write and affects the elaborateness of what

they produce (Honig, 2001, p. 93). For most students, an inductive and exploratory

approach to the instruction of spelling appears appropriate. However, for severely

struggling spellers a more deductive, systematic, direct approach is preferred. In either

case, an emphasis should be placed on the interrelatedness of spelling, phonics,

morphology, and vocabulary.

Honig (2001) purported that according to the latest research, the best predictor of

reading success is "whether the child has developed basic phonemic awareness" (p. 28).

Coles (2000) and others disputed this analysis. Regardless of the arguments between

researchers, studies of exemplary teachers have indicated that they teach phonics

knowledge and strategies to students rather than assigning pages in phonics workbooks

(Allington, 1997). Effective teachers have a broad-based approach for teaching word

analysis, which includes a variety of practices. A plethora of contextual reading

experiences are provided in the classroom environment. Much of the actual literacy

instruction is based on word study. Student writing experiences are emphasized. Hyde et

al. (1993) wrote that teachers need to provide daily opportunities for children to share and

discuss what they have been reading and writing about. It is important to spend less time

completing workbook and skill sheets and more time interacting with peers.

Researchers continue to argue about the issue of sequencing skill development (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1997; Coles, 2000; Honig, 2001). Hierarchical models of reading instruction have found little support in the literature in the last decade. Phonemic activities and systematic code instruction along with meaningful connected reading should be provided no matter the instructional approach chosen by the teacher (Strickland, 1994). Originally discussed in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, and Wilkinson (1985), noted that there is "ample" evidence that independent reading does much more to develop literacy ability than workbooks and practice pages completed in a typical basal.

Many researchers believe that long-term ability grouping is detrimental to reading development (Allington, 1998; Hiebart, 1983). Ability group practices usually lead to the low group being designated for more drill work rather than higher quality reading instruction. Participants often develop negative self-concepts and dislike reading. A middle group designation tends to be treated in a mediocre manner, experiencing similar problems as the low group students.

High group children are often treated with more respect. They are allowed to do more independent reading and are given a higher quality of reading instruction. Consequently, they developed positive attitudes toward the reading act (Flippo, 1997; Slavin, 1991). Research has demonstrated that high group students achieve high levels even if they are not ability grouped (Flippo, 1997).

Allington (1998) discussed other literacy grouping practices that were found to be ineffective. Holding children back from entering a primary grade should be avoided. Rather, placement in developmental kindergartens or transitional grade classes has

proven to be more effective. Allington (1998) found that often students had not previously been exposed to print or literacy activities in the home. Few opportunities arose to engage in guided, independent reading and writing events. Allington (1998) concluded that students who are retained in a grade commonly perform better during the retention year but again fall behind in years to come. Research has suggested that children who have been retained perform worse in the literacy area than they would have if they had been promoted (Shepard & Smith, 1990).

Lundberg (1994) conducted a study investigating whether teachers of literacy in an "effective classroom" taught in a different way compared with teachers in less effective classrooms (p. 190). Factors such as a general emphasis on assessment, student-oriented reading activities, comprehension instruction, and frequent assessment of low-order skills appeared to relate to teaching practices. Lundberg (1994) was hesitant to cite a consistent pattern of teacher behaviors that differentiated successful literacy teachers. He generalized that a "good reading teacher" for intermediate elementary students had several characteristics (p. 191). They were generally females who read outside of school about education and literature. Effective teachers used formal and informal assessment methods and provided many opportunities for students to be involved in independent and silent reading activities. Students were encouraged to read outside of school and use the library.

During reading lessons in the classroom, Lundberg (1994) emphasized that students must be guided to interact actively with text by relating their own experiences to what is read. Making generalizations, inferences and predictions brought about success and student achievement (Lundberg, 1994). Effective teachers took students' interests

into account when selecting reading materials. Phonic elements were intermittently presented. The majority of teachers in the study, although primarily teaching fourth grade students, reported frequent emphasis and assessment of phonic elements in their teaching. The most common type of grouping was by ability.

Pressley, Rankin, and Yokoi (1996) studied eighty-three primary teachers who were nominated by their supervisors as effective instructors of literacy. Two questionnaires were used which surveyed teachers' practices. The results of the study found that teachers had a commitment to similar instruction for students of all abilities with additional support for weaker readers. They used overt modeling of reading on a daily basis in the classroom environment. Overt modeling of comprehension strategies took place several times a week. Weekly modeling of writing also occurred. The majority of surveyed teachers drilled students in letter recognition and letter sound associations.

A combination of grouping in the classrooms was practiced. Most instruction took place in whole group. Small group cooperative instruction took place 46% of the instructional period. The traditional "three-group" approach was not endorsed. Ninety-six percent of the teachers involved in the survey sample indicated that they permitted the students to progress in literacy at their own pace (Pressley et al., 1996).

On the whole, literacy instruction was integrated with the rest of the curriculum. Ninety-six percent of the teachers surveyed taught phonics and spelling. The majority used published curricula available through school sources. Ninety-six percent explicitly taught the development of vocabulary, with the majority of words selected from selections read and discussed. A similar percentage of teachers taught comprehension

and prediction skills (Pressley et al., 1996). Ninety-three percent taught critical thinking skills such as brainstorming, categorizing, cause and effect, and webbing.

Pressley et al. (1996) concluded that teachers endorsed learning in a risk-free environment. Positive feedback and relevance were important in relating literacy to everyday life experience. Goals of each lesson had to be conveyed effectively. Outside reading was encouraged. Teachers accepted where a child presently was and worked to improve their literacy development.

Based on the data collected, Pressley et al. (1996) recommended that teachers' educational experiences should include exposure to a number of approaches and literacy practices. Duffy (1991) wrote, "I think we do better by teaching teachers multiple alternatives, by teaching them how to network these so they can be assessed" (p. 17).

Wragg et al. (1998) would have us believe that "sometimes there is congruence between what people say they do and what one observes" (p. 112). On many occasions there can be a gap between aspiration and actuality. Based upon data from thirty-five teachers in their case study, aspects of practice were identified through interviews and observed events. It was concluded that the teachers in the study had a "fairly even split" between those who practiced one to one reading and group reading (p. 113). One to one reading was defined as a child reading to an adult. Group reading was seen as an opportunity for students to support each other in reading on a regular basis. Both strategies were considered an elastic concept with many different interpretations. A "consistent individual" interpretation would involve round robin reading (Wragg et al., 1998, p. 115). A "varied individual" interpretation would involve no single predominant

pattern of practice. A "strong corporate" interpretation exhibited common school vocabulary and terminology (Wragg et al., pp. 116 - 117).

Wragg et al.'s (1998) study demonstrated that teachers' perceived best literacy practices were varied. Three-fourths of the teachers interviewed in the study provided quiet reading opportunities for students. This usually meant everyone in the classroom was involved in some type of reading activity. Other strategies mentioned were quiet reading, paired reading, and the teacher reading aloud to the class. The use of Big Books was emphasized. Reading as a stimulus for writing was important often resulting in children's own personalized and self made books. Many teachers presented literature through author studies. Phonics teaching within the structure of the reading scheme with repetitive key words was also commonplace.

Broad common factors observed amongst above average successful literacy teachers varied. Effective literacy teachers acquired "good professional" knowledge of children's authors and effective teaching strategies (Wragg et al., 1998, p. 265). Student progress was celebrated publicly, increasing children's confidence in the learning process. Pupils were encouraged to develop independence and autonomy in attacking unfamiliar words, "taking their own reading forward" (Wragg et al., 1998, p. 267).

Effective teachers were able to individualize and match their teaching practice to their pupils. Classroom management skills exhibited were highly successful in garnering a large percentage of students to become involved in on task behaviors for a majority of the school day. This success was attributed to the quality of personal relationships between students and the teacher. Systematic monitoring and assessment took place. Overall, teachers expressed and emphasized high positive expectations. Wragg et al.

(1998) concluded that teachers appeared to believe in "the need for pragmatic eclecticism" (Wragg et al., 1998, p. 166). They recognized that teaching is a complex process requiring a balance of methods.

Gambrell, Morrow, Neuman, and Pressley (1999) summarized best practices supported by research studies during the 1990s. Reading should be taught for authentic meaning. Literacy experiences need to be designed to provide information, pleasure, and to perform tasks. Multiple text use, which linked and expanded concepts, was found to be an effective practice as measured by achievement tests. High quality literature should be utilized in the teaching of literacy. Integrating a comprehensive word study and phonics program into the reading and writing instruction was suggested. A balance needed to exist between teacher and student led discussions.

Ideally, students should be instructed in small groups with ample time to read in the classroom environment. A balance should exist between direct instruction, guided instruction, and independent learning. It was concluded that a variety of assessment techniques to inform instruction are needed in any classroom. The researchers admitted that the practices they found effective were largely based on constructivist learning theory which states that goals of literacy instruction should largely be concerned with helping students learn "new meanings in response to new experiences" (Gambrell et al., 1999, p. 14).

Strickland (1994) recommended that no one teaching strategy or practice is likely to be most effective for all children. Focusing on a single "good" idea or strategy leads to "theoretical distortions" and undesirable practices (MacGinitie, 1991). Duffy and Hoffman (1999) agreed that the best instruction resulted when a combination of methods

was utilized together. Effective literacy teachers were eclectic, imposing harmony on "inherently uncertain and ambiguous" classroom environments (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999, p. 11). Effective literacy instructors cut across philosophical lines combining methodological techniques and adapting programs and materials to their students' particular needs (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999).

Reutzel (1996) concluded that an effective literacy program requires a variety of approaches. These must be carefully selected and balanced to ensure that children are regularly exposed to literature, a variety of reading materials, language experiences, and systematic instruction. Leu and Kinzer (1999) agreed stating that "children learn best when teachers take a balanced approach" using a range of strategies to teach reading (p. 11).

Hoffman et al. (1998) reiterated that effective literacy teachers were adaptive. Practices that worked were embraced and expanded. Literacy instructional practices that didn't work were abandoned (Hoffman et al., 1998). Shanahan and Neuman (1997) referred to this adaptive nature of teaching as "methodological eclecticism." Stahl (1997) preferred to label this concept "principled eclecticism."

Rather than following a specific instructional model, teachers must be authorized to adapt instructional models to a given situation. To accomplish this aspect of their development, they must be taught a variety of instructional models rather than one favored by the teacher's college reading professor (Duffy, 1997). Much energy has been spent convincing teachers to "adopt one or another program, theory, model, or teaching strategy" (Duffy, 1997, p. 357). In practice, however, there are no panaceas.

Teacher Educational Background and Experience

Over a decade ago, Stahl and Muller (1989) completed a comparative study of international reading programs. They found there was a great variation in effectiveness within a particular instructional method. One of the areas studied were the characteristics of effective teachers. Varying patterns and interpretations of the concept of teacher education made it difficult to compare the length of teacher education across countries. It was found that older teachers had a different form of training than younger ones. In many countries, more experienced teachers were associated with higher student achievement levels. Other researchers have reiterated that length of work experience and educational background seems to have a positive effect on student achievement (Creemers, 1994; Lundberg, 1994).

Windham (1988) wrote that the amount and quality of both academic education and teacher training are assumed to be positively correlated with the teachers' knowledge and their ability to impart that knowledge to students (p. 27). Sprinthall and Theiss-Sprinthall (1983) stated that requiring experienced teachers who have "invested in their professional development" over numerous years to exhibit the same teaching behaviors as novice teachers is ignoring the "developmental nature of teacher growth" (p. 18). Overall, little research exists which studies the relationship between teachers' educational experience and training and literacy practices utilized in the classroom.

Socioeconomic Status of Students

Researchers have found that practitioners' instructional behaviors vary for students of different socioeconomic, mental, and psychological characteristics (Brophy &

Evertson, 1974). The effectiveness of differing teaching behaviors depends on the goals of instruction. Instructional acts that seem to increase achievement on basic skill tests and factual exams differ distinctly from those that appear to increase complex cognitive learning problem solving ability and creativity (Peterson, 1979).

Moll (1991) wrote that it is "inarguable" that working-class and poor children receive classroom instruction that is different from wealthier classes (p. 65). Generally, the former received rote, drill, and practice instruction. The work is mechanical, highly structured, and redundant (Anyon, 1981; Oakes, 1995; Ramsey, 1985). More recently, Allington and Franzen (2000) wrote that these findings were corroborated in a study conducted by Purcell-Gate, McIntyre, and Freppon (1995). Their results suggested that children from low-income families benefit more from "rich language and literacy environments" rather than traditional skills based classrooms (Allington & Franzen, 2000).

Anyon (1981) examined the classroom instruction of five elementary schools in contrasting social-class communities. These were designated by family income and occupation. Working-class students were those whose families earned below $12,000 annually. Executive elite schools were those where families earned an income exceeding $100,000. The data was collected through classroom observations. Interviews with teacher, principals, and district administrators were conducted. An assessment of instructional materials was also undertaken. Teachers included in the sample were described as "good and excellent" instructors (Anyon, 1981, p. 66).

Anyon (1981) found the instruction in working-class classrooms to be robotic and rote with little student decision making and choice taking place. Rarely was an

explanation given for the teacher's decision making. Lessons were "made" easier to understand with teachers "shouting" directions and stressing the need for quiet (Anyon, 1981, p. 66). In contrast, work in classrooms where students of higher socioeconomic status learn was designed to "develop one's analytical powers" (p. 67). Students were taught to reason through problems and the production of intellectual products of top academic quality. Teachers exercised little control over students' movement and carefully monitored the difficulty of lessons for intellectual challenge. Anyon (1981) attempted not to generalize beyond the sample involved in the study. However, others have extended the validity of her study. Goodlad (1984) and Oakes (1986, 1995) reached similar conclusions.

Griffin's (1986) findings from a small-scale study of teachers engaged in teaching a "master model of reading" suggested that teachers who must follow directions rather than making their own decisions about curriculum and instruction suffered a decrease in their self-estimate of their own professional worth (Griffin, 1986, p. 127). The teachers in the study were expected to follow specific steps in teaching a series of predetermined lessons which were augmented by prepackaged student worksheets and flipcharts. Materials were not designated to be resources. Rather, they were designed to be used by all teachers with all students. The instructions given explicitly stated that the available materials should not be supplements or supplemented by other resources. When observing instruction in inner-city classrooms, teachers illustrated a fairly high level of fidelity to the curriculum for the most part following the stringent instructions given by the manuals. However, their students were often off task, exhibiting a low level of

interest in the lesson being presented. Routines of the lesson appeared more important than the content or learning processes (Griffin, 1991).

Through interviews with teachers it was revealed that they "did" the curriculum because it was expected. Many had misgivings about its effectiveness and appeared to have developed a mindset that they were not as knowledgeable as they "once thought they were" (Griffin, 1991, p. 127). Self-descriptions of the teachers' professional lives often concurred with their verbalized statements.

There is an unequal distribution that favored the "already privileged" (Moll, 1991, p. 67). White affluent students received more effective teaching than other groups. Minority poor students received instruction that emphasized low-level basic literacy and computational skills. As the social class of the community increased there appeared to be a concomitant shift in instruction from "rote to more process oriented" teaching, simplicity to complexity in skill presentation, and low to high teacher expectations (Moll, 1991, p. 67).

Brophy (1991) offered that more explanation of the purposes of learning activities was needed with "disadvantaged" students. Cognitive modeling of processes involved in responding to activities needed to be demonstrated. Extensive scaffolding through shorter steps toward "eventual independent and self-regulated" performance must be provided. More post-performance guided reflection should be practiced, designed to develop recognition of how the activity fits into the "bigger picture." The teacher must provide metacognitive experiences so that awareness of strategies is developed.

Allington (1998) found that higher socioeconomic students were provided more opportunities to read independently and silently. Instruction was more focused on

comprehension than decoding. Students were encouraged to use crosschecking strategies to identify and verify unknown words. Higher socioeconomic students were usually asked more "thoughtful" questions (Allington, 1998, p. 558). They were more likely to be provided with an array of texts that were of more appropriate complexity than were lower socioeconomic children.

Allington (1998) concluded that literacy practices vary for "at-risk" students and their peers in higher ability groups.   The former experienced round-robin reading peppered with interruptions focused on sounding and matching. Isolated skills and drills were utilized with less exposure to stimulating comprehension activities. Differential instruction provided to lower achieving children often worked to perpetuate the continued use of ineffective reading strategies (Allington, 1998).

Research and Practice

Research on teachers has traditionally been an important issue. Research traditions arise as a reaction to disappointing results generated by a previous period or research issue (Creemers, 1994). The paradigm dominating research on teaching for several decades has been a process-product paradigm or what Gage (1963) referred to as the "criterion for effectiveness" paradigm (p. 103). Its roots lie in applied behavioristic psychology. This approach looks for teacher behaviors such as teaching styles, techniques, or strategies that predict or cause products. Researchers attempt to construct a scientific basis for teaching (Ross, Cornett, & McCutcheon, 1992).

A basic goal of process-product research is essentially to define relationships between what teachers do in the classroom (process of teaching) and what happens to

students (products of learning) (Ross et al., 1992, p. 155). Process-product research assumes that knowledge of such relationships will lead to improved instruction. Once effective instruction is described, programs can be designed to promote effective practices (Anderson, Evertson, & Brophy, 1979). Often the educational results studied are those that relate to growth in student knowledge and skills (Gage, 1963).

Most process product research is descriptive and correlational. It is assumed that teaching is a linear activity in which particular teacher actions produce particular pupil responses. Therefore, teaching effectiveness results from a combination of discrete observable teaching behaviors. Since the 1970s, with the influence of cognitive science, process-product researchers have focused concern on teacher thinking in addition to teacher behavior and student achievement (Anderson et al., 1979).

An alternative paradigm of research emphasizes the intermediary process between teaching and learning (Doyle, 1980), the ecology of classrooms, and the necessity of defining students' learning processes (Creemers, 1994). Creemers (1994) referred to this type of research as interpretive. The focus is based on cognitive processes and decision making. Studies of this nature have been characterized as studies of "classroom ecology" (Ross et al., 1992). The pedagogy presumes that teaching is a highly complex, context specific, interactive activity, in which differences across classroom, schools, and communities are "critically important" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, p. 3). Attention is paid to reciprocal interactions between persons and their environments. Teaching and learning is considered a continuous interactive process. Unobservable processes such as teachers' thoughts, attitudes, and perceptions are considered rich sources of data (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990).

Process-product research is often referred to as quantitative. Interpretive research is considered qualitative. The methodology involved in process-product and interpretive research differs. The former uses controlled correlational and quasi-experimental research with large samples. Descriptive and inferential statistics are utilized in developing causal propositions regarding forms of teacher behavior associated with pupil performance gains (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990). Interpretive researchers use participant observation methods or conduct extensive open-ended interviews in a single setting. Findings are reported in narrative form without making generalizations beyond the context studied.

The relationship between research and practice is inevitably complex (Calderhead, 1993). Individual areas of research relate to different aspects of practice in a variety of ways. Teacher educators take a more eclectic view both of research and practice. It is common for research to be interpreted in line with one particular restricted view of classroom practice (Calderhead, 1993). Eisner (1984) questioned whether research results inform or influence practice. Often practice is changed because new ideas seem intuitively "compelling" rather than "data-based" conclusions (Eisner, 1984, p. 446).

The relationship between research and practice is infrequently viewed as interactive. Teacher educators have essentially not turned to research to develop fuller conceptualizations of their work (Calderhead, 1993). Börg's (1987) survey research reported that although research could be helpful, few educators rarely read it or used the findings in their work. One of the reasons cited was teachers' lack of confidence in their abilities to understand studies reported in research publications. There was confusion by

teachers over contradictory results. A perception existed that research could not be applied in teachers' individual classroom situations (Börg, 1987).

Research often frustrates teachers who seldom have opportunities to link theory with practice. "Research indicates" has become a euphemism for academics, many whom haven't been in a classroom for decades, who use results as a "right" to tell teachers what to do (Bliss, 1991, p. 47). It has been theorized that teachers tend to shy away from research for this reason (Bliss, 1991).

In Olson and Singer's (1994) study conducted over a two-month period, teachers completed a series of self-report inventories concerning their beliefs about literacy and the teaching of reading. Classrooms were observed three times to obtain anecdotal records of instruction. One observation was scheduled. The remaining were not. Olson and Singer (1994) utilized the *DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile* (DeFord, 1985) and Gove's (1983) *Conceptual Framework of Reading Interview* to collect their data. It was concluded teachers felt that research can improve practice if it helped "clarify practical arguments in teachers' minds" (Olson & Singer, 1994, p. 98). Westwood et al.'s (1997) study, aimed at providing evidence on the reliability and validity of the *Teachers' Beliefs About Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ),* found that teachers' classroom practices were strongly influenced by the beliefs they hold about learning and teaching.

The question remains as to why so many teachers have not learned to use research-based theory in their decision making activities (Finstermacher, 1986). Finstermacher (1986) believed that research should help teachers "understand, modify, change, and solidify" arguments for their actions (p. 97). Too often teachers do not

understand the reasons for their actions. They appear willing to improve pedagogical skills but are often unaware of how their beliefs affect changes they make (Olson & Singer, 1994). Research can improve practice if it helps "clarify practical arguments in teachers' minds" (Finstermacher, 1986, p. 98). Greenwood and Parkay (1989) concluded that many teachers have not developed a process or strategy for utilizing research in making decisions about kinds of problems they face daily in their instructional lives.

Chin and Benne (1989) discussed the empirical rational approach as a strategy often employed to initiate organizational change. Essentially, practitioners are enlightened as to the necessity for change through the presentation of researchable proof that the new strategy advocated is a desirable and appropriate alternative to traditional practice. Historically, the empirical rational change strategy has been used in education with a variety of results (Grant, 1998). It has often been interpreted through the initiation of policies that allow for the hiring of staff consultants whose prime responsibility becomes the dissemination of research and knowledge through education. Usually this has taken place through the venues of workshops and conferences. Grant (1998) concluded that if not followed with the careful implementation of personnel selection and hiring, clarification of a common language and understanding, or a support system, dissemination and utilization of research-based practices will not bring about lasting changes in practitioners' behaviors.

Criticism of Research

The field of education does not have a strong, well-established professional community that takes as its charge the design and development of practice and relevant

theory, products, and procedures based on scientific principles and data (U. S. Department of Education, 1998). Critics have contended that researchers leave practitioners out of their agenda setting process (Monahan, 1993). Research is designed around theoretical topics rather than actual classroom situations. "Real" problems researchers purportedly have been entrusted to solve are "ignored" (Mosenthal, 1989, p. 718). Thus, educators and academics are not always supportive or convinced as to the accuracy of quantitative research (Slavin & Fashola, 1998). Goldenberg (2000) pointed out that researchers are forever nullifying one another. This practice simply provides room for prejudice to take root and spread among practitioners.

Recently, researchers have criticized definitive studies such as the 1994 National Institute of Child Health and Development study (Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996) which reviewed thirty years of reading research (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998). Criticism has been offered that research citations were too often absent for conclusions inferred from the data. Those research studies that were "cited" dealt with limited student populations with learning problems and disabilities. Thus, generalization of results across the broad spectrum of literacy learners was a broad leap (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998).

The 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress study (Campbell, Donahue, Reese, & Phillips, 1996) and the NICHD study (Campbell, Reese, O'Sullivan, & Dossey, 1996) data were cited in the California "philosophical" turnabout (Flippo, 1999). The state's adopted literature-based language arts framework was scrapped for mandated explicit phonics and spelling instruction programs paired with skill based basal programs. Ironically, the NAEP study indicated nothing about students' competencies

with phonics or phonemic awareness (Flippo, 1999). These skills were not assessed. The data reported students' comprehension and the amount and kinds of reading they were doing in and out of school. Students were tested on their explicit and implicit understandings of text. However, because of California's interpretation of the data and change of literacy practice venue, two-thirds of the states have mandated similar policies (Flippo, 1999; Goodman, 1998).

Coles, (2000), Grossman (1998), and Taylor (1998) are a few of the numerous critics who have voiced concern about the findings of Foorman, Francis, Fletcher, Schatschneider, and Mehta (1998), the NICHD study (Campbell et al., 1996), and their use as impetus for major state mandates. Both studies used small narrow samples. The subjects involved in the Foorman study were Chapter I primary grade students. One group received what Foorman and her colleagues called "whole language instruction." However, a specific program was not cited. The other two groups received commercial reading programs both heavily infused with direct phonics instruction (Goodman, 1998). The researchers found that second grade students who learned to "read" through the use of commercial skill based programs read word list tests better than the students in a "whole language" program (Goodman, 1998). Disagreement continues to center around the research protocol, sample groups utilized, and the traditional skill based commercial programs implemented in the studies (Allington & Woodside-Jiron, 1998; Flippo, 1999). The authenticity of the NICHD and Foorman et al. studies have also been questioned because both were privately funded by corporations that have book company holdings.

Educational practice is unlikely to make lasting advances until educators demand to see evidence and require full documentation of developer's claims (Duffy & Roehler,

1991). Researchers must be clear about definitions of the word "works" (Roller, 2001, p. 634). Findings must be communicated in ways that "preserve scholarly integrity" but convey the importance and usefulness of the findings (p. 634). The mingling of old and new teaching approaches raises fundamental issues for the reporting of research. By putting a label on a method, we do not define its scope (Chall, 1996). Attempts must be made by researchers to come closer to the research goal of understanding "what leads to what" (Chall, 1996, p. 285).

Teachers must understand and be able to communicate the influences that "research, theory, and practice" have on the instructional decisions they make (Roller, 2001, p. 635). Practitioners should be able to communicate their instructional decisions in terms that clearly mark how research findings have been implemented. Concurrently, they should possess awareness as to what influences their decisions when research is unclear (Roller, 2001). Roller (2001) concluded that only when teachers are empowered to do so would the field of research gain credibility.

Duffy and Roehler (1991) suggested that research designed to determine teachers' literacy practices must be carried out in real classroom environments utilizing teacher input. Through the documentation of educational professionals and their practices it is hoped that an understanding can be gained as to teachers' actions and whether instructional decisions are affected by available research data. Subsequently, practitioners must be directly involved in proposals for change which emanate from findings determined through research data, even those mandated by "powerful sources" (Klein, 1991). Ultimately, the goal of any research is to create "decision-makers that

metacognitively control(s) the process of creating and modifying patterns of instructional actions" (Duffy & Roehler, 1991, p. 78).

Summary of Chapter

Although a large body of research concerning effective literacy instructional models and practices exists, little has been documented as to how teachers perceive research and its impact on actual classroom instruction. Recently, researchers have recommended that effective practitioners should utilize a variety of instructional models and practices in their instruction of literacy. However, the few surveys that do exist demonstrate that teachers often utilize a dominant model, that of direct instruction, regardless of the socioeconomic status of their school's population, extent of the teacher's educational background, or years of teaching experience. It is important to understand how teachers perceive the research on effective literacy practices and whether their perceptions impact instruction in the classroom environment. This knowledge is imperative to researchers to aid in effective dissemination and understanding of the data that results from their efforts.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

This study examined teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. Chapter III will identify and describe the research design, methodology, instrument, and procedures utilized to implement the study. Steps in sample selection are enumerated. A discussion is provided concerning the use of specific statistical analyses employed to interpret the data collected through the use of a survey instrument created for this research study and semi-structured interviews.

The research question to be examined in this study is "What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy?" The subsidiary questions are:

1. Are teachers' espoused instructional beliefs likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

2. Are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

3. Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused model of literacy instruction that they practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

4. Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

5. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the acquisition and instruction of

literacy?

6. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting

instruction?

7. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction that they

practice?

8. What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and it application to practice?

Design of Study

This study was correlational in nature attempting to determine whether a

relationship exists between schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational

background, extent of teachers' classroom experience, and teachers' espoused beliefs

concerning the instruction of literacy. In effect, this research has a 3 x 2 x 3 (schools'

socioeconomic status x extent of educational background x extent of classroom

experience) factorial design (See Table 1). This design enabled the researcher to

determine if a relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables (Börg

& Gall, 1989).

This study was also descriptive in that it was designed to answer questions

concerning the current status of teachers and their espoused instructional beliefs. The

study was dependent on self-reported data collected through the use of a questionnaire

and semi-structured interviews from a purposively selected population. The

questionnaire employed a Likert-type scale designed to measure the degree of agreement

and disagreement with issues pertinent to the research and subsidiary research questions posed in the study.

Table 1

Number of Teachers in Each Category of the Design

Degree	Bachelor's				Graduate			
Experience	1-4 Years	5-20 Years	>20 Years	Total	1-4 Years	5-20 Years	>20 Years	Total
Schools' SES								
Advantaged	12	20	10	42	9	25	36	70
Mixed	9	22	4	24	0	16	6	22
Disadvantaged	16	15	9	40	7	22	15	44
Total	37	46	23	106	16	63	57	136

Setting of the Study

The study was conducted in Miami, Florida during the fall of 2000. The study was carried out in eighteen Miami-Dade County public schools. Only elementary schools were utilized as survey sites. For purposes of this study, schools were selected according to the socioeconomic status of the school population. This was determined by the schools' participation in the federally funded free and reduced lunch program (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1999a). "Advantaged" schools were defined as those schools with less than 25% of the student population involved in the free and reduced lunch program. "Disadvantaged" schools were those schools with more than 90% of the school population enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. "Mixed" schools were those schools that had between 50% and 75% of the student population on

free or reduced lunch. Three schools from each of the six regions that comprise the

Miami-Dade County School System were selected as survey sites.

Participants – Demographic Information

Approximately 500 educational practitioners were employed in the schools

selected for the study. These included administrators, teachers, media specialists, and

other personnel. Although the schools involved in the study were selected on the basis of

the composition of the socioeconomic status of the students, caution should be exercised

in generalizing the results to other school populations.

Of the 500 surveys distributed, a total of 242 were completed and returned. This

constitutes an overall return rate of 48%. Of 242 total respondents, 231 were teachers,

two curriculum coordinators, six administrators, one media specialist, with four

classifying themselves in the category of "Other." Seventy-nine (32.6%) of the teacher

respondents taught primary grades (Pre-K through second grade). Ninety-seven (40.1%)

of the teachers respondents taught intermediate grades (Grades 3 through 5). The

remaining sixty-six (27.3%) were categorized as practitioners who interacted with a

variety of grades at the elementary level. Data provided by Miami-Dade County (Miami-

Dade County Public Schools, 1999b) demonstrated a similar statistical comparison for

personnel employed by grade level.

One hundred twelve (46.3%) respondents characterized their school's population

as "advantaged." Eighty-four (34.7%) responded that their school's population was

"disadvantaged." Forty-six (19%) respondents labeled their school's population as

having "mixed" socioeconomic status (See Table 2). Since the sample schools were

purposively selected, relatively equal percentages for each level of the variable should

have been evident. Perceptions varied for respondents employed in schools with mixed

socioeconomic status. Their responses demonstrated a tendency to differ from the actual

designation given to their schools based on student participation in the federal

government's reduced and free lunch program (See Table 2).

Table 2

Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents From Schools With Different SES Levels

(N = 242)

Schools' Socioeconomic Status	n	%
Advantaged	112	46.3
Mixed	46	19.0
Disadvantaged	84	34.7

The majority of respondents, one hundred and nine, 45%, had garnered between

five and twenty years of classroom experience. Eighty participants, 33.1%, had over

twenty years of teaching experience. Fifty-three respondents, 21.9%, had less than four

years of experience in the classroom (See Table 3). Data provided by Miami-Dade

County Public Schools (1999b) indicated that the number of instructional personnel

possessing over twenty years of classroom experience outweighed the other levels of the

variable. Countywide, personnel who have five to twenty years of experience constituted

the smallest group employed in the school system. However, this level of the variable

represented the largest group of participants who returned questionnaires (See Table 3).

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents' Extent of Classroom Experience

(N = 242)

Years of Experience	n	%
1 – 4 Years	53	21.9
5 – 20 Years	109	45.0
> 20 Years	80	33.1

One hundred thirty-six, 56.2%, of the study participants indicated that they possessed earned graduate degrees (See Table 4). Data provided by Miami-Dade County Public Schools (1999b) showed that a larger number of instructional personnel employed in elementary and secondary schools possessed undergraduate degrees than graduate degrees.

Table 4

Frequencies and Percentages of Respondents' Extent of Educational Background

(N = 242)

Degree	n	%
Bachelor's	106	43.8
Graduate	136	56.2

Instrument

Study participants completed a questionnaire referred to as the *Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire (LIPQ)*. The inventory was modeled on survey instruments developed by DeFord (1985) and Westwood, Knight, & Redden (1997). *The DeFord Theoretical Orientation To Reading Profile (TORP)* was originally designed to correlate teachers' literacy instructional models to methods and materials they utilized in the classroom environment (DeFord, 1985). The original sample used to validate the *TORP* consisted of ninety teachers who aligned themselves to one of three literacy instructional models; direct instruction or the phonics model, whole language, and skills orientation (DeFord, 1985). Westwood, Knight, and Redden's (1997) *Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ)* was developed to obtain data concerning teachers' perceptions of effective literacy instruction.

The *Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire (LIPQ)* consisted of three items found in *The DeFord Theoretical Orientation To Reading Profile* (1985) and seven items from Westwood, Knight, and Redden's (1997) *Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy Questionnaire.* The remaining twenty-eight questionnaire items of the *LIPQ* were designed and written by the researcher based on components of literacy curriculum and instruction presented in the research literature. In the articles that discussed and detailed the origins of the questionnaires, the authors of the *TORP* (1985) and *TBALQ* (1997) granted permission for their use in future research studies.

The questionnaire used in this study was divided into three general categories; demographic and personal background information, statements of instructional practices, and statements of beliefs concerning forces and influences that affect instructional

practice. The demographic section of the questionnaire provided information about the sample population. Questionnaire item one ascertained the participant's current position. Questionnaire item two was designed for respondents to indicate the grade levels they interact with on a daily basis. Questionnaire item three reflected teachers' perceptions of the socioeconomic status of their student population. Questionnaire items four and five asked for respondents to indicate the highest educational degree they had earned and the extent of their classroom experience. Respondents were asked to note their gender and ethnicity in questionnaire items six and seven.

Questionnaire items eight through twenty-six were designed to ascertain teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. Questionnaire items eight, eleven through fourteen, twenty-one, and twenty-two were worded similar to statements found in Westwood, Knight, and Redden's (1997) *Teachers' Beliefs about Literacy Questionnaire (TBALQ)*. Questionnaire items fifteen through seventeen had similar wording as statements found in DeFord's (1985) *Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP)*. Questionnaire items nine, ten, eighteen through twenty, and twenty-three through thirty-nine were designed and written by the researcher.

Questionnaire items eight and sixteen related to beliefs concerning literacy acquisition and models of literacy instruction. Items nine through eleven, thirteen, fifteen, and seventeen pertained to the instruction of vocabulary, word attack skills, and comprehension. Questionnaire items twelve, fourteen, eighteen, nineteen, and twenty-four through twenty-six stated organizational practices and materials used in the instruction of literacy. Items twenty through twenty-three were designed to ascertain beliefs concerning language arts instructional practices (See Table 5).

Table 5

Questionnaire Items 8 through 26 – Beliefs Concerning the Acquisition and

Instruction of Literacy

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement
08[a]	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.
09	Devoting specific time to word recognition in isolation is a desirable practice.
10	Words and their definitions should be taught in order to build up children's sight vocabulary.
11[a]	Beginning readers should be taught phonics.
13[a]	Sight vocabulary learning in isolation does transfer to text reading.
14[a]	Effective literacy programs should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition, and phonics.
15[b]	When coming to a word that is unknown the reader should be encouraged to guess upon the pronunciation and go on.
16[b]	Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.
17[b]	Fluency and expression are necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.
18	Teachers should regularly test reading skills.
19	Reading aloud to student should occur daily.
20	Spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary are essential for successful literacy instruction.
21[a]	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.
22[a]	Words learned in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing.

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement
23	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of grammar skills.
24	An effective literacy program combines a graded reading scheme and authentic texts.
25	Ability grouping should be used in the teaching of literacy.
26	Cooperative learning should be used in the teaching of literacy.

Note. [a] From P. Westwood, B.A. Knight, & E. Redden, 1997, p. 324. Copyright 1997 by United Kingdom Reading Association. Reprinted with permission.

Note. [b] From D. DeFord, 1985, p. 363. Copyright 1985 by University of Michigan. Reprinted with permission.

Questionnaire items twenty-seven through thirty-seven were designed to assess teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which research has demonstrated affect instructional practice. Questionnaire items twenty-six through twenty-eight and thirty-one through thirty-three included statements which attempted to gauge respondents' beliefs concerning the effects of professional literature, district mandates, and peer discussions pertaining to research on instructional practice. Questionnaire items twenty-nine and thirty attempted to ascertain whether respondents believed that participation in university courses or mentoring programs had affected practice. Questionnaire item thirty-four determined whether teachers were members of literacy associations. Items thirty-five and thirty-six elicited information as to whether participants had read an educational journal or text concerning literacy during the past year. Questionnaire item thirty-seven was designed to determine whether respondents had recently attended workshops concerning literacy teaching or learning (See Table 6).

Table 6

Questionnaire Items 27 through 37 – Forces and Influences Affecting Instructional

Practice

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement
27	Reading professional literature has influenced my beliefs about literacy.
28	Reading professional literature has led to significant changes in my literacy practices.
29	Being a participant in university courses has influenced my literacy practices.
30	Supervising and mentoring novice teachers has influenced my literacy teaching practices.
31	My thinking about the teaching of literacy has been strongly influenced by research.
32	Hearing teachers talk about research has strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.
33	District mandates have strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.
34	I am a member of a professional literacy association.
35	I have read a book(s) about literacy teaching or learning in the past year.
36	I have read a journal or magazine about literacy teaching or learning in the past year.
37	I have attended a conference or a workshop concerning literacy teaching or learning in the past year.

Questionnaire items thirty-eight and thirty-nine were presented as multiple-choice

questions. Item thirty-eight examined teachers' beliefs as to which instructional model

best summarized their literacy beliefs and practice. Questionnaire respondents were

asked to choose from three models as to which best characterized their pedagogy and

practice in the area of literacy. They were provided with the choice of an eclectic model

that represented the combining of direct skills instruction and whole language practices.

The other two choices consisted of the direct instruction skills based model or the whole

language instructional model (See Table 7).

Item thirty-nine assessed teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its

application to practice. Respondents were asked to designate the statement that

represented the frequency which research was applied to instructional practice in the

classroom environment (See Table 7).

Table 7

Questionnaire Items 38 and 39 – Beliefs Concerning Models of Instruction

and Research and Its Application to Practice

Item No.	Questionnaire Statement
38	Which of these statements best represents your beliefs and practices concerning literacy instruction? A. I support skills and back-to-basics. B. I support an eclectic approach that combines both basic skills and whole language. C. I support whole language beliefs and practices.
39	Which of these statements best represents your beliefs concerning research and its application to practice in the classroom environment? A. I read an apply research to my classroom practice on a regular basis. B. I read and apply research to my classroom practice sometimes. C. I read and apply research to my classroom practice rarely. D. I do not read or apply research to my classroom practice.

Reliability of the *Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire (LIPQ)* was established through the use of a pilot study group located at a school site in Region V. The group's membership consisted of twenty participants from four different home schools enrolled in an English as a Second Language certification class. Participants varied in their extent of educational background and experience. All members of the group were elementary school practitioners involved in the instruction of students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Teachers of the gifted, learning disabled, and English as a Second Language (ESOL) were also represented in the group's membership.

Small group discussions were held which focused on participants' concerns related to issues pertinent to the instruction of literacy. Several weeks after the initial discussions, the participants of the pilot study group were asked to complete the questionnaire that evolved from their concerns and the research literature. Following the completion of the questionnaire, further discussion with the pilot study group indicated a need to rewrite questionnaire item three due to its ambiguity.

A high number circled on the Likert scale for questionnaire items 9, 10, 11 through 14, 16, 17, 21 through 23, and 25 demonstrated a lack of "congruence" with research supported instructional practices. A high number circled on the Likert scale for questionnaire items 8, 15, 18 through 20, 24, and 26 demonstrated agreement with research supported instructional practices. The circling of a high number for questionnaire items 27 through 37 indicated respondents' agreement that described forces and influences had demonstrated an effect on their instructional practice.

Responses on questionnaire item 38 were given values to indicate "congruence" with effective instructional models supported by the research literature. Choice B (I

support an eclectic approach that combines both basic skills and whole language) was assigned a value of three. Choice A (I support skills and back-to-basics) was given a value of one, indicating a low "congruence" with instructional practices supported by research literature.

Responses to questionnaire item thirty-nine were coded in a similar manner as item thirty-eight. Choice A (I read and apply research to my classroom practice on a regular basis) was assigned a value of "4." Choice B (I read and apply research to my classroom practice sometimes) was assigned a value of "3." Choice C (I read and apply research to my classroom practice rarely) was assigned a value of "2." Choice D (I do not read or apply research to my classroom practice) was given a value of "1."

Questionnaire items 9, 10, 11 through 14, 16, 17, 21 through 23, and 25 reflected low "congruence" with instructional practices supported by the research literature. These items were recoded before reliability analyses were run. Results were analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to check reliability. The standardized item alpha was .77 for the initial nineteen surveys analyzed. The standardized item alpha for the questionnaire used in the study sample of 242 participants was .78 which demonstrates a relatively high correlation between items (Cohen & Holliday, 1982).

Table 8 displays the means, standard deviations, and item-total correlations for the questionnaire items within the dependent variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. The standardized item alpha for this subsection for the 242 questionnaires used in the study was .55 demonstrating a "modest" correlation between items (Cohen & Holliday, 1982). The item-total correlations range from a low of .07 to .34 indicating a weak relationship between items.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, and Items With Total Score Correlations:

Espoused Instructional Beliefs (Questionnaire Items 8 – 26)

Item No.	Espoused Instructional Belief Statements	M	SD	Item-total correlation
08	Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	3.31	1.15	.13
09	Devoting specific time to word recognition in isolation is a desirable practice.	3.07	1.05	.15
10	Words and their definitions should be taught in order to build up children's sight vocabulary.	4.19	2.76	.05
11	Beginning readers should be taught phonics.	2.24	.52	.07
12	Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	2.45	1.03	.16
13	Sight vocabulary learned in isolation does transfer.	2.77	.97	.22
14	Effective literacy programs should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition, and phonics.	2.56	.81	.26
15	When coming to a word that is unknown, the readers should be encouraged to guess upon the pronunciation and go on.	3.44	1.11	.11
16	Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.	2.39	.64	.16
18	Teachers should regularly test reading skills.	4.23	.89	.17
19	Reading aloud to students should occur daily.	4.70	.65	.34

Item No.	Espoused Instructional Belief Statements	$\underline{M}$	$\underline{SD}$	Item-total correlation
20	Spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary are essential for successful literacy instruction.	4.07	1.03	.12
21	Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	3.26	1.28	.23
22	Words learned in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children writing.	2.68	1.01	.28
23	Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of grammar skills.	2.58	.86	.22
24	An effective literacy program combines a graded reading scheme and authentic texts.	1.29	1.29	.16
25	Ability grouping should be used in the teaching of literacy.	1.09	1.08	.11
26	Cooperative learning should be used in the teaching of literacy.	4.00	.98	.30

Table 9 displays the means, standard deviations, and item-total correlations for the questionnaire items within the dependent variable of teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which research has determined affect instructional practice. The standardized item alpha for this subsection for the 242 questionnaires used in the study was .77 indicating a relatively high correlation (Cohen & Holliday, 1982). Item total correlations ranged from a low of .26 to a high of .57 indicating a modest relationship between items.

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, and Items with Total Score Correlations: Espoused Beliefs

Concerning Forces/Influences Affecting Instruction - (Questionnaire Items 27 – 37)

Item No.	Forces/Influences Statements	M	SD	Item-total correlation
27	Reading professional literature has influenced my beliefs about literacy.	3.72	1.21	.54
28	Reading professional literature has led to significant changes in my literacy practices.	3.55	1.28	.52
29	Being a participant in university courses has influenced my literacy practices.	3.73	1.27	.47
30	Supervision and mentoring novice teachers has influenced my literacy practices.	2.96	1.47	.36
31	My thinking about the teaching of literacy has been strongly influenced by research.	2.27	1.37	.56
32	Hearing teachers talk about research has strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.	2.87	1.32	.40
33	District mandates have strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.	3.54	1.20	.27
34	I am a member of a professional organization.	2.82	1.32	.26
35	I have read a book(s) about literacy teaching or learning in the past year.	3.79	1.18	.52
36	I have read a journal or magazine about literacy teaching/learning in the past year.	4.07	1.03	.57
37	I have attended a conference/workshop concerning literacy teaching/learning in the past year.	3.98	1.16	.41

The mean score for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning the model of literacy instruction teachers practice was 2.58 with a standard deviation of .802. The mean score indicates that the majority of respondents supported an eclectic instructional approach combining direct instruction of basic skills and whole language practices rather then any single pedagogy.

The mean score for the dependent variable of beliefs about research and its application to practice was 3.05 with a standard deviation of .80. The mean indicates that the majority of respondents espoused the belief that they read and applied research to their instructional practice "sometimes."

<div align="center">Selection and Specification of Variables</div>

<u>Independent Variables</u>

The independent variables in this study are schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, and extent of teachers' classroom experience. The socioeconomic status variable has three levels ranging from over 90% of the population enrolled in the free or reduced lunch program (Disadvantaged), 25% or below on free or reduced lunch (Advantaged), and between 50% and 75% on free or reduced lunch (Mixed). By using three levels, advantaged, mixed, and disadvantaged for the SES variable, a stratified sample that was more likely to reflect the total student population would be produced (Fowler, 1993). The teacher educational background variable has two levels; those with an earned bachelor's degree and those with a graduate degree. The teacher experiential variable has three levels ranging from 1 to 4 years, 5 to 20 years, and over 20 years.

<u>Dependent Variables</u>

The dependent variables in this study are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. Dependent variable one is teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. Questionnaire items eight through twenty-six represent this variable. These items are statements related to beliefs concerning the nature of the reading process, models of instruction, reading and language arts instructional practices, and organizational practices used in literacy programs.

Dependent variable two is teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which research has demonstrated affect instructional practice. Questionnaire items twenty-seven through thirty-seven represent this variable.

Dependent variable three is teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of literacy instruction that they practice. Responses to questionnaire item thirty-eight represent this variable. Dependent variable four is teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice. Questionnaire item thirty-nine is designed to represent this variable.

Data Collection Procedures

Once reliability was established for the *LIPQ*, permission was needed from the Miami-Dade County School System to conduct research. An application to conduct research was submitted to the Research Review Committee of the Office of Education Evaluation. After permission to conduct the study was granted (See Appendix A), principals of schools selected as participants in the sample were contacted for the purpose

of explaining the study and receiving verbal permission to send questionnaires and conduct interviews.

Quantitative Data

An administrative contact was designated at each school for the purpose of distributing and explaining the questionnaire. During the last week of August 2000, questionnaires were mailed to principals of schools included in the sample. A letter of explanation and gratitude and a copy of the county's permission were enclosed. A researcher self-addressed envelope was included for the return of surveys from the school site by the deadline given in mid-September.

The questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose of the questionnaire, assuring the respondents of the anonymity of their responses, instructions for completion of the questionnaire, and an expression of gratitude for respondents' participation in the study. Once received at the school site, questionnaires were administered by an administrative designate and completed by the participants during faculty meeting time. A copy of the questionnaire cover letter sent to principals and respondents is included in Appendix B.

Two weeks after the initial mailing, reminder letters were sent to each of the participating schools. A second mailing of questionnaires, similar to the initial mailing, was sent in mid-September to the all schools involved in the study. The deadline given was the second week of October. Seventeen of the eighteen schools selected for the sample returned questionnaires by mid-October. Subsequent letters of gratitude and thanks for participating in the study were then mailed to principals of all schools included in the sample.

<u>Qualitative Data</u>

Interviews were used to clarify, corroborate, and compare information collected from the original questionnaire sample. Interviews were held at three school sites by the researcher with a purposive sample of a total of nine participants. Each interview took approximately forty-five minutes to an hour to complete.

Based on criterion provided by the researcher, participants were purposefully selected by the administrator on site. It was requested that a practitioner representing each of the levels of the experiential variable be asked to participate in the interview process at three school sites. Three participants were selected from a socioeconomically "advantaged" school with less than 25% free and reduced lunch students. Three participants were selected from a socioeconomically "mixed" school with approximately 50% to 75% of students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. Three participants were selected from a socioeconomically "disadvantaged" school with over 90% of the students enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program. At each school site a participant was interviewed who represented each of the three levels of the experiential variable; 1 to 4 years of experience, 5 to 20 years of experience, and over 20 years of experience.

Open-ended questions (See Appendix D) were asked of participants by the researcher in a semi-structured interview situation. Seven of the interviews were conducted on a one to one basis. The remaining two interviews were conducted with participants conjointly. Although they represented different levels of the experiential variable, the two participants taught as a team and requested to be interviewed in the same room where they were involved in a previously scheduled planning session.

Interview participants were given the opportunity to discuss specific literacy instructional practices used on a daily basis as well as explain a typical sequence of lesson development. They summarized their beliefs concerning effective literacy practice and the frequency with which strategies supported by research literature were utilized in the classroom environment. Teachers involved in the interview process were asked to indicate and discuss the model of literacy instruction they practiced. Participants' beliefs concerning research and its application to practice were also discussed.

Analysis

Parallel analysis of qualitative and quantitative data was used in this study, similar to many recent educational studies found in the research literature (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The quantitative data (questionnaire) was collected and analyzed concurrently with the qualitative data (interviews) providing a triangulation of the data sources.

Quantitative Data

In order to find answers to the main research question, descriptive results were explored through the use of measures of frequency and association. Regarding the subsidiary questions, the Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) is an appropriate statistical procedure to use in evaluating the effects of the three independent variables (schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, and extent of teachers' classroom experience) on the dependent variables; teachers' espoused instructional beliefs, espoused beliefs concerning influences and forces which affect instruction, espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction they practice, and

beliefs concerning research and its application to practice. Although similar to the

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) which can determine whether several groups differ on

one dependent variable, the MANOVA procedure differs in that it tests "whether several

groups differ on more than one dependent variable" (Börg & Gall, 1989, p. 557). The

hypotheses were tested at the .05 alpha level.

Qualitative Data

        Several stages were undertaken in the task of analyzing collected qualitative data.

Manifest and latent content analysis techniques were utilized (Berg, 1998). Initially, each

taped interview was transcribed. The transcriptions were then examined using an open

coding framework. In vivo codes or terms used by interview participants were analyzed

as to their frequency of use in the transcribed interviews. Inductive and deductive

analysis was employed to identify several themes. Themes were then utilized to compare

interview data to instructional practices recommended in research literature and

information garnered through the questionnaire. Several constructs were created to link

the various themes.

                              Summary of the Chapter

        Chapter III has presented a detailed review of the research and subsidiary research

questions; design; sample selection; instrumentation; and preliminary procedures

employed in this study. The purpose of the study was to examine teachers' espoused

beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy and to determine whether teachers' espoused

instructional beliefs would differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of

teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. The

study also set out to determine whether a relationship existed between teachers' espoused instructional beliefs concerning the model of instruction that they practice, research and its application to practice, and the independent variables.

The sample utilized in the study was purposively selected using eighteen elementary schools throughout the six regions of the district. Six "disadvantaged" schools with student populations of 90% or over enrolled in the free and reduced lunch program, six "advantaged" schools with student populations of less than 25% on free or reduced lunch, and six "mixed" schools with student populations of between 50% and 75% on free or reduced lunch were selected for the study.

A questionnaire, which used items presented in two existing instruments as well as items that were researcher designed and written, was utilized to survey the sample population. Divided into three sections, the questionnaire determined demographic information of participants; teachers' espoused instructional beliefs; teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which research literature has shown affect instructional practice; espoused instructional model of literacy which teachers' practice; and beliefs concerning research and its application to practice. Interviews were held with a purposive sample of nine teachers. Responses to open-ended questions were used to clarify and corroborate information collected from the surveyed sample.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was used to evaluate the effects of the three independent variables; schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, and extent of teachers' classroom experience, on the dependent variables of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs, espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences which affect practice, espoused model of literacy instruction, and beliefs

concerning research and its application to practice. Scores for related subsections of the questionnaire were used for analyses comparison. The hypotheses were tested at the .05 alpha level.

Nine purposively selected participants were interviewed utilizing open-ended questions. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed through an open coding frame. In vivo codes were noted for their frequency and themes were identified. Constructs were created in which data was analyzed as to how it related to teachers' verbally espoused instructional beliefs. These were then compared to the data collected from the surveyed sample. In the following chapter, Chapter IV, results of the study will be discussed and analyzed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter will present the findings of the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the data. Included is a discussion based on analyses of scores derived from subsections of the questionnaire. Statistical analyses were performed to determine and identify teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy and whether differences existed between teachers' espoused beliefs depending on students' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Statistical analyses were also carried out to determine if a relationship existed between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning models of instruction or research and its application to practice, and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, and extent of teachers' classroom experience.

The format of this chapter is comprised of a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative analyses used in analyzing the research and subsidiary research questions. This will include: measures of frequency, variability, association, and Multivariate Factorial Analysis of Variance. Qualitative analyses include: in vivo codes, themes, and constructs, and an overall summary of the results.

What Are Teachers' Espoused Beliefs Concerning the Instruction of Literacy?

In general, the tendency was for respondents to agree with the majority of questionnaire items that represented statements of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. This included questionnaire items 10, 11, 13, 14, 16 through 19, 23, 24, and 26. Specifically, questionnaire items 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 23 defined practices identified

with a direct instruction skill based model. Items 17, 18, 19, 24, and 26 defined

instructional practices advocated in whole language pedagogy.

Responses to questionnaire items 8, 9, 15, 21, and 25 were relatively evenly

divided between the categories of Disagree and Agree. These statements reflected noted

differences in beliefs related to whole language and skills based pedagogies.

Specifically, items 8, 15, and 21 were practices discussed in the research literature as

predominantly supported by whole language advocates. Questionnaire items 9 and 25

pertained to basic tenants of traditional direct skills based instruction.

According to the data obtained from the questionnaires, respondents appear to be

divided as to their espoused beliefs concerning how students acquire literacy.

Concurrently, respondents were divided as to their espoused beliefs concerning how

students should be instructed in word recognition and "attack" unknown words while

reading. The value of invented spelling and the use of ability grouping in organizing

instruction resulted in divided responses. The majority of respondents disagreed with the

statement that spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary are essential for successful

instruction. This statement reflected a tenant of whole language pedagogy.

Table 10 demonstrates the percentage of responses for the questionnaire items

included in the dependent variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs according

to the independent variable of schools' socioeconomic status. As was previously

discussed, the frequencies reflect that respondents, regardless of their schools'

socioeconomic status, extent of educational background, or classroom experience

espoused beliefs favoring the formal instruction of literacy through the direct teaching of

reading and language arts skills. To accomplish this, respondents favored the utilization

of graded commercial reading programs containing controlled vocabulary. They also indicated that authentic texts should be combined with the commercial reading program adopted by the school site to teach basic reading and language arts skills.

Respondents espoused the belief that sight vocabulary learned in isolation transferred to text reading. Students should be encouraged to guess unknown words they encounter during their reading ventures. Fluency and expression were believed to be necessary components indicating a student's ability to comprehend text.

The majority of responses indicated that specific time should be set aside each week for the direct teaching of grammar and spelling skills. Respondents were divided in their espoused beliefs concerning how students acquired literacy and whether instructional time should be devoted to the teaching of word recognition in isolation. However, it was posited that words learned in isolation transferred to students' writing. Questionnaire responses were divided as to whether inventive spelling reinforces "bad habits" in students. The practice of using reading vocabulary as a component of the weekly spelling list elicited disagreement from the majority of respondents.

Practitioners indicated that they favored the use of ability grouping in organizing their literacy instruction. Questionnaire responses also demonstrated that the majority of teachers endorsed the use of cooperative learning strategies in literacy instruction.

For purposes of reporting questionnaire responses the categories of Strongly Agree and Agree have been collapsed and labeled Agree. The categories of Strongly Disagree and Disagree have also been collapsed and labeled Disagree. The final category reported is labeled Uncertain (See Table 10).

Table 10

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Instructional Beliefs According to

Schools' Socioeconomic Status (N = 242)

	Advantaged				Mixed				Disadvantaged		
Item No.	A %	U %	D %		A %	U %	D %		A %	U %	D %
08	54	10	35		59	9	33		36	17	46
09	59	5	36		50	17	33		64	8	27
10	68	5	17		83	4	13		88	5	7
11	96	3	2		96	2	2		95	4	1
12	65	27	8		54	39	7		62	20	18
13	75	11	14		59	13	28		63	16	21
14	91	5	5		78	4	17		76	11	12
15	63	5	32		72	13	15		51	11	38
16	96	2	2		89	7	4		89	4	6
17	75	5	21		62	7	22		77	6	20
18	93	2	5		96	4	--		87	8	5
19	97	1	2		98	2	--		98	2	--
20	14	8	78		9	4	87		11	4	86
21	27	19	54		26	11	63		31	18	51
22	60	19	21		67	22	11		67	16	18
23	80	7	13		74	11	15		79	8	13
24	72	10	18		72	13	15		65	18	17
25	64	10	26		54	26	20		57	16	2
26	79	3	19		85	4	11		81	4	16

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number. Dashes indicate no data was available for this item and cell.

Table 11 displays the percentage of responses for the questionnaire items included in the dependent variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs according to the independent variable of extent of educational background. Frequency of responses indicates similar responses to those displayed in Table 10.

Table 11

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Instructional Beliefs According to Teachers'

Extent of Educational Background (N = 242)

	Bachelor's Degree				Graduate Degree		
Item	A	U	D		A	U	D
No.	%	%	%		%	%	%
08	45	14	41		52	10	38
09	62	9	29		57	9	35
10	87	6	8		79	4	17
11	96	2	2		95	4	1
12	66	28	6		59	26	11
13	65	15	20		70	11	19
14	85	8	8		82	7	11
15	53	11	36		58	7	11
16	91	6	4		94	2	4
17	81	4	15		68	7	25
18	91	6	4		92	4	4
19	96	3	1		98	1	1
20	5	6	89		18	6	76
21	28	17	55		29	17	54
22	65	20	15		63	17	21
23	81	10	9		76	6	17
24	64	17	19		74	10	16
25	60	6	24		60	14	26
26	78	5	17		82	2	16

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 12 displays the percentage of responses for the questionnaire items included in the dependent variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs according to the independent variable of extent of classroom experience. Frequencies of responses are similar to those discussed in Table 10.

Table 12

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Instructional Beliefs According to Teachers'

Extent of Classroom Experience (N = 242)

	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 – 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
Item No.	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %
08	53	17	38	49	13	39	46	13	41
09	59	12	30	59	6	36	60	11	29
10	90	4	6	81	8	11	79	1	20
11	94	2	4	98	2	0	94	5	1
12	51	30	19	65	25	10	65	28	8
13	55	15	30	74	12	14	67	13	20
14	83	6	11	86	6	7	80	9	11
15	49	12	39	59	7	34	56	11	33
16	89	4	7	95	2	2	91	6	9
17	76	4	21	75	5	20	71	8	21
18	89	3	8	95	5	1	90	5	5
19	100	0	0	96	3	1	98	1	1
20	6	0	94	11	7	82	18	8	75
21	26	11	62	24	14	62	36	25	39
22	68	13	19	6	19	18	63	20	18
23	81	8	11	82	7	11	73	10	18
24	66	17	17	73	13	15	68	11	21
25	55	15	30	59	18	25	66	10	24
26	76	2	23	85	2	13	78	6	16

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

A total score for the variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs ranged from a high of ninety-five to a low score of nineteen. The mean for this variable was 60.95 with a standard deviation of 6.05. The most frequently recorded total score was 61. A high score indicated a level of "congruence" with recommended instructional practices and strategies discussed in the research literature. The means and standard deviations for the dependent variable of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs according to the independent variables are displayed in Table 13.

Table 13

Means and Standard Deviations for Espoused Instructional Beliefs

(Questionnaire Items 8 – 26) According to the Independent Variables (N = 242)

Degree and SES	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 - 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	N	M	SD	n
Bachelor's									
Advantaged	65.25	2.90	12	59.60	6.09	20	58.30	5.76	10
Mixed	60.89	4.37	9	57.91	8.56	11	61.50	3.00	4
Disadvantaged	59.50	4.52	16	60.80	4.74	15	57.11	14.95	9
Total	61.70	4.67	37	59.59	6.33	46	58.39	9.92	23
Graduate									
Advantaged	63.00	4.24	9	62.40	4.79	25	60.39	6.39	36
Mixed	--	--	--	63.38	2.94	16	62.67	5.68	6
Disadvantaged	62.57	6.60	7	61.59	3.53	22	59.93	6.56	15
Total	62.81	5.21	16	62.37	3.96	63	60.51	6.31	57

Note. Dashes indicate lack of respondents.

With regard to the research question "What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy?" it would appear that overall results indicated that respondents agreed with the majority of questionnaire statements that reflected tenets of the skills based direct instructional model. Teachers were divided as to their beliefs concerning statements that described practices advocated by whole language pedagogy.

What Are Teachers' Espoused Beliefs Concerning Forces and Influences Affecting Instruction?

Based on responses to questionnaire items twenty-seven through thirty-seven it would appear that the majority of participants agreed with the statement that research literature had influenced and brought about changes in their instructional practice. Respondents appear to agree with questionnaire item twenty-nine that participation in university classes has influenced literacy practices. The majority of teachers agreed that district mandates had influenced the use of specific literacy practices utilized in the classroom. Participants espoused the belief that they had read literature concerning literacy within the past year and attended a conference or workshop whose theme was literacy based.

Respondents were relatively evenly divided in their espoused belief as to the effect of mentoring and its influence on their teaching practice. Miami-Dade County limits those teachers who may participate in the mentoring program designed as a means of modeling instructional strategies and practice for education students and new practitioners. In order to be considered a "clinical supervising teacher," practitioners must be certified through training workshops conducted by Miami-Dade County. It

would appear that teachers who reflect uncertainty or disagreement to questionnaire item thirty might not have been involved with the mentoring program.

Questionnaire item thirty-two elicited a variety of responses. Responses were relatively evenly divided between the categories of Agree, Disagree, and Uncertain. The frequency of incidences in which practitioners interact, discuss, and reflect about research may be related to the responses garnered from this item.

Participants were relatively evenly divided on questionnaire item thirty-four which ascertained membership in a literacy organization. Membership in any professional organization is voluntary and arbitrarily based on one's willingness to pay the fees and participate in the activities provided.

Table 14 displays the percentages of responses demonstrated by respondents for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction by the independent variable of schools' socioeconomic status. As was previously discussed, the frequency of responses indicated that teachers espoused the belief that exposure to research literature had influenced and led to significant changes in their instructional practices. However, respondents were divided as to their beliefs concerning whether research had influenced their thinking concerning the instruction of literacy.

Responses indicated that participation in university courses had influenced literacy practices. This was supported by the demographic data, which indicated that the majority of respondents had earned a graduate degree. Respondents believed that district mandates continued to influence literacy practice. The majority of teachers indicated that

they had read a text or journal article concerning literacy during the previous year. Most

had recently attended a conference or workshop concerning literacy teaching or learning.

Respondents were relatively evenly divided as to the influence that supervising

and mentoring of novice teachers had on their own literacy practices. They were divided

as to whether peer discussion concerning research had influenced their literacy

instruction. Responses indicated that teachers were divided as to membership in a

professional literacy organization (See Table 14).

Table 14

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Forces/Influences

Affecting Instruction According to Schools' Socioeconomic Status (N = 242)

	Advantaged			Mixed			Disadvantaged		
Item No.	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %
27	74	13	13	63	13	24	77	12	11
28	60	20	20	59	15	26	79	11	11
29	71	16	13	67	13	20	81	9	10
30	48	31	21	56	22	22	46	35	19
31	54	23	23	57	15	28	62	23	15
32	39	25	36	43	24	33	40	35	25
33	60	13	27	73	9	17	67	13	19
34	36	24	40	28	17	54	38	27	44
35	71	8	21	65	9	26	77	6	17
36	84	5	12	74	11	15	92	2	6
37	75	5	20	80	9	11	79	7	14

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 15 depicts the percentages of responses demonstrated by respondents for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction according to the independent variable of extent of educational background. Frequencies of responses are similar to those previously discussed in Table 14.

Table 15

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Forces/Influences Affecting Instruction According to Teachers' Extent of Educational Background (N = 242)

	Bachelor's Degree			Graduate Degree		
Item	A	U	D	A	U	D
No.	%	%	%	%	%	%
27	68	17	15	77	9	14
28	66	19	15	67	13	30
29	74	17	9	74	10	16
30	51	33	16	48	28	24
31	55	27	18	59	17	24
32	44	31	25	37	25	38
33	66	13	21	54	12	24
34	30	30	40	34	20	44
35	73	9	18	72	6	22
36	81	7	12	88	4	9
37	74	9	17	80	4	16

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 16 depicts the percentages of responses demonstrated by respondents for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction according to the independent variable of extent of classroom experience. Frequencies of responses were similar to those discussed in Table 14.

Table 16

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Forces/Influences Affecting Instruction According to Teachers' Extent of Classroom Experience (N = 242)

Item No.	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 – 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %	A %	U %	D %
27	68	11	21	73	16	11	73	12	15
28	72	11	17	65	21	14	65	11	24
29	76	11	13	79	13	8	65	15	20
30	49	40	11	49	29	22	50	26	24
31	55	23	22	57	25	18	59	16	25
32	45	32	23	37	32	31	43	20	38
33	59	15	25	67	14	19	65	9	2
34	26	25	49	38	17	46	29	33	39
35	66	8	26	72	8	20	78	6	16
36	72	8	20	87	4	9	90	5	5
37	75	5	20	77	7	16	80	5	15

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

A total score on the variable of teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instructional could have ranged from a high of fifty-five to a low of

eleven. A high score indicated agreement with questionnaire statements of influences

and forces that respondents had experienced and felt impacted their instructional practice.

The mean score was 38.29 with a standard deviation of 7.82. The most frequently

recorded total score was that of 38. Table 17 displays the means and standard deviations

of the dependent variable according to the three independent variables.

Table 17

Means and Standard Deviations for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Forces/ Influences

(Questionnaire Items 27 – 37) Affecting Instruction According to the Independent

Variables (N = 242)

Degree and SES	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 – 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Bachelor's									
Advantaged	39.33	9.24	12	34.90	7.05	20	39.40	6.40	10
Mixed	40.11	9.74	9	34.82	10.54	11	39.75	10.56	4
Disadvantaged	35.63	6.99	16	39.20	6.46	15	38.39	10.43	9
Total	37.92	8.47	37	36.98	7.93	46	38.39	8.61	23
Graduate									
Advantaged	36.11	9.03	9	39.08	8.16	25	38.83	7.82	36
Mixed	--	--	--	40.50	6.51	16	38.00	8.22	6
Disadvantaged	35.86	7.36	7	40.05	6.54	22	40.27	6.61	15
Total	36.00	8.07	16	39.78	7.14	63	39.12	7.46	57

Note. Dashes indicate that no data was obtained due to a lack of respondents who could
be classified with the corresponding independent variables.

With regard to the research question "What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction?" overall results indicated that respondents agreed with the majority of questionnaire statements. They believe that research literature, university classes, and district mandates affected or had led to significant changes in their instructional practice. The majority of respondents had read a professional journal or text discussing literacy instruction. Most had recently attended a workshop or conference whose theme centered on literacy instruction. Teachers were divided as to whether peer discussions, participation in mentoring experiences, or membership in a professional literacy organization had affected instructional practice.

What Are Teachers Espoused Beliefs Concerning the Model of Literacy Instruction That

They Practice?

The majority of respondents, 74%, regardless of the independent variable, appeared to believe that the model of instruction they practiced was eclectic combining strategies that emphasized the direct instruction of skills and practices supported by whole language pedagogy. A smaller proportion, 20% of respondents, espoused the belief that their instructional model was primarily based on the direct instruction of skills. Only 6% of respondents identified their espoused model of literacy instruction as that of whole language pedagogy.

Table 18 displays the percentages of responses demonstrated by participants for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning teachers' instructional model of literacy they practice according to the independent variable of schools' socioeconomic status.

Table 18

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Model of Instruction According to Schools'

Socioeconomic Status (N = 242)

Instructional Model	Advantaged %	Mixed %	Disadvantaged %
Eclectic	80	78	75
Skills Based	19	18	23
Whole Language	1	4	2

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 19 depicts the percentages of responses demonstrated by participants for the

dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning teachers' instructional model of

literacy they practice according to the independent variable of extent of educational

background.

Table 19

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Model of Instruction According to Teachers'

Extent of Educational Background (N = 242)

Instructional Model	Bachelor's Degree %	Graduate Degree %
Eclectic	76	80
Skills Based	21	19
Whole Language	4	2

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 20 depicts the percentages of responses demonstrated by participants in the study for the dependent variable of espoused beliefs concerning teachers' instructional model of literacy they practice according to the independent variable of extent of classroom experience. Frequencies of responses were similar to those displayed in Table 18. The majority of respondents believed that their model of literacy was eclectic combining both direct skills instruction and whole language instructional practices.

Table 20

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Model of Instruction According to Teachers'

Extent of Classroom Experience (N = 242)

Instructional Model	1 – 4 Years %	5 – 20 Years %	> 20 Years %
Eclectic	79	79	76
Skills Based	17	19	23
Whole Language	4	2	1

Note. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 21 displays the means and standard deviations of the dependent variable of teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of instruction they practice according to the independent variables. Overall, the tendency was for teachers to espouse the belief that they followed an eclectic approach to instruction combining both direct instruction of skills and whole language practices.

Table 21

Means and Standard Deviations for Espoused Model of Instruction According to the

Independent Variables (N = 242)

Degree and SES	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 – 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Bachelor's									
Advantaged	2.50	.90	12	2.50	.89	20	2.80	.63	10
Mixed	2.67	.71	9	2.18	.98	11	3.00	.00	4
Disadvantaged	2.56	.81	16	2.53	.83	15	2.56	.88	9
Total	2.57	.80	37	2.43	.89	46	2.74	.69	23
Graduate									
Advantaged	2.78	.67	9	2.76	.66	25	2.53	.84	36
Mixed	--	--	--	2.75	.68	16	2.67	.82	6
Disadvantaged	2.71	.76	7	2.64	.79	22	2.20	1.01	15
Total	2.75	.68	16	2.71	.71	63	2.46	.89	57

Note. Dashes indicate that no data was obtained due to a lack of respondents who could be classified with the corresponding independent variables.

What Are Teachers' Espoused Beliefs Concerning Research and Its Application To

Practice?

The majority of respondents, 61%, regardless of students' socioeconomic status,

extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of classroom experience, espoused

the belief that they applied research "sometimes" in their classroom practice. A

proportion of respondents, 26%, stated that they "regularly" applied research to their

classroom practice. The percentage of respondents who claimed that they "do not" apply

research was 8%. The percentage of respondents who "rarely" applied research to

classroom practice was 6%.

Table 22 displays the percentages of participants' responses for the dependent

variable of espoused beliefs concerning research and the frequency which it is applied to

practice according to the independent variable of schools' socioeconomic status. Note

that percentages for Tables 22, 23, and 24 have been rounded to the nearest whole

number.

Table 22

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Research and Its Application

to Practice According to Schools' Socioeconomic Status (N = 242)

Frequency	Advantaged %	Mixed %	Disadvantaged %
Regularly	25	28	27
Sometimes	61	52	63
Rarely	8	7	2
Do not	6	13	7

Table 23 displays the percentages of participants' responses for the dependent

variable of espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice according

to the independent variable of extent of educational background.

Table 23

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Research and its Application

to Practice According to Teachers' Extent of Educational Background (N = 242)

Frequency	Bachelor's Degree %	Graduate Degree %
Regularly	30	24
Sometimes	54	65
Rarely	8	4
Do not	9	7

Table 24 displays the percentages of participants' responses according to the

independent variable of extent of educational experience.

Table 24

Percentages of Responses for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Research and its Application

to Practice According to Teachers' Extent of Classroom Experience (N = 242)

Frequency	1 – 4 Years Experience %	5 – 20 Years Experience %	> 20 Years Experience %
Regularly	28	28	23
Sometimes	60	58	63
Rarely	6	6	6
Do not	6	8	9

Table 25 displays the means and standard deviations of the dependent variable of

teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice according to

the independent variables.

Table 25

Means and Standard Deviations for Espoused Beliefs Concerning Research

and Its Application to Practice According to the Independent Variables (N = 242)

Degree and SES	1 – 4 Years Experience			5 – 20 Years Experience			> 20 Years Experience		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Bachelor's									
Advantaged	2.75	1.06	12	3.10	.79	20	2.90	.57	10
Mixed	3.56	.53	9	2.36	1.29	11	3.50	.58	4
Disadvantaged	3.13	.72	16	3.33	.49	15	3.11	.93	9
Total	3.11	.84	37	3.00	.92	46	3.09	.73	23
Graduate									
Advantaged	3.33	.50	9	3.16	.80	25	3.00	.72	36
Mixed	--	---	--	2.94	.68	16	2.83	.98	6
Disadvantaged	2.86	.38	7	3.18	.73	22	2.87	1.06	15
Total	3.13	.50	16	3.11	.74	63	2.95	.83	57

Note. Dashes indicate that no data was obtained due to a lack of respondents who could be classified with the corresponding independent variables.

Multivariate Analysis of Variance

To answer the subsidiary questions in the study, Multivariate Analysis of

Variance (MANOVA) was conducted in an attempt to statistically determine differences

between groups of teachers. No significant main effect was found for schools'

socioeconomic status, [Wilks' Λ = .93, $\underline{F}$ (16, 436) = .97, p = .49, ς^2 = .03.] No

significant main effect was found for extent of teachers' educational background, [Wilks'

Λ = .93, $\underline{F}$ (8, 218) = .83, p = .58, ς^2 = .03.] Evidence of a significant main effect was not

found for extent of teachers' classroom experience, [Wilks' Λ = .93, $\underline{F}$ (16, 436) = 1.06, p

= .39, ς^2 = .04.] Since none of the multivariate main effects and interactions was

significant, further univariate analysis was not warranted (Bryman & Cramer, 1997).

Results of the MANOVA are displayed in Appendix E.

Subsidiary Research Questions

Results of the MANOVA provided the following answers to the subsidiary

questions:

Subsidiary Question One

Are teachers' espoused instructional beliefs likely to differ depending on schools'

socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational Background, or extent of teachers'

classroom experience?

Since the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) did not show a significant

main effect or interaction of the variables, response to this question is negative.

Subsidiary Question Two

Are teachers 'espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting

instruction likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of

teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experiences?

Since the multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) did not show a significant

main effect or interaction of the variables, response to this question is negative.

Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused instructional model of literacy that they practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of classroom experienc e?

As has been previously discussed, no evidence of a significant relationship between the dependent variable and the independent variables appears to exist.

Subsidiary Question Four

Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

Questionnaire item thirty-nine reflected teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the influence of research and its application to practice in the classroom environment. There was no evidence of a significant relationship as demonstrated in the analysis of the MANOVA.

Summary of Quantitative Analyses

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. Specifically, teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the acquisition of literacy, models of instruction, reading and language arts practices and strategies, materials utilized for instruction, and organization of literacy programs were investigated. Teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction were also examined. Teachers' espoused beliefs as to the model of literacy instruction they practice and research and its application to practice were noted.

The frequency of responses indicated that respondents espoused beliefs which favored the formal instruction of literacy through the direct teaching of reading and language arts skills. Respondents favored the use of commercial reading programs that are written using controlled vocabulary. They indicated that authentic texts should be utilized along with the commercially published reading program.

Respondents espoused the belief that sight vocabulary learned in isolation transferred to text reading. Readers should be encouraged to guess unknown words they encounter. Respondents believed that fluency and expression are necessary components indicating the ability to comprehend text. Specific time should be set aside each week for the direct teaching of grammar and spelling skills. Words learned in isolation transferred to students' writing. Respondents were divided in their beliefs as to how students acquired literacy and whether instructional time should be devoted to the teaching of word recognition in isolation. They were divided in their responses as to whether inventive spelling reinforces "bad habits" in students. Respondents indicated that they favored the use of ability grouping in organizing their literacy instruction. Cooperative learning should be used in the teaching of literacy. The practice of utilizing reading vocabulary as a component of the weekly spelling list elicited disagreement from the majority of respondents.

Statistical analyses were performed to determine if respondents' scores on subsections of the questionnaire were likely to differ based on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of classroom experience. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if significant differences existed in teachers' espoused instructional beliefs or beliefs concerning forces

and influences affecting instruction, and the independent variables of schools'

socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, and extent of teachers'

classroom experience. Another purpose of the MANOVA was to determine if a

relationship existed between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the model of literacy

instruction they practice or beliefs concerning research and its application to practice, and

the independent variables. No significant main effects or interactions of the variables

were noted. Since none of the multivariate main effects and interactions was significant,

further univariate analysis was not warranted (Bryman & Cramer, 1997).

Qualitative Results

Interviews were conducted to clarify data obtained through the questionnaire

utilized to sample the eighteen schools involved in the study. Questions were asked in an

attempt to determine teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy,

forces and influences affecting instruction, the model of instruction which they practice,

and their beliefs about research and its application to practice. A high incidence of

surveyed respondents classified themselves as adhering to an eclectic model of

instruction, combining basic skill and whole language practices. It was the intention of

the researcher to determine whether a purposive sample of respondents would verbally

espouse similar beliefs as those garnered through the questionnaire sample.

Analysis

In analyzing the interview data gathered in this study, both latent and manifest

content analysis techniques were utilized (Berg, 1998). Initially, each taped interview

was transcribed. The transcriptions were then examined using an open coding

framework. In vivo codes or terms used by interview participants were analyzed as to their frequency of use in the transcribed interviews. Inductive and deductive analyses were applied to identify themes. Several themes emerged based on their frequency of appearance in the interviews. The themes of *basal reader*, *phonics instruction*, *vocabulary instruction*, *skill instruction, reading aloud to students, and grouping for instruction* were frequently mentioned during interviews. The constructs of *comprehension, eclectic, research,* and *mandated testing* were then created. In coding the data, the aforementioned themes were linked to the constructs and analyzed as to how they related to the data collected from the surveyed sample. Rather than using the subsidiary qualitative research questions to organize the discussion of the results of the interview data, themes and constructs will be employed involving comparisons of interview and questionnaire data.

<u>Basal Reader</u>

All the teachers interviewed stated that they utilized a commercial *basal* reading series as the basis of their reading program and practice. These were defined as the graded text adopted by the county for use in the classroom environment. Basal reading materials were used with total group instruction. Teachers stated that they "introduced" the story on the first day of instruction with a variety of activities. Often these included vocabulary activities and background knowledge discussions. The primary teachers then read the story orally to the class. Intermediate elementary grade teachers stated that their students read the stories independently. All interview participants admitted that the majority of reading activities utilized in the classroom came from the basal's teacher manual.

Several teachers, primary and intermediate, stated they utilized novels and literature in their classroom. Those teachers that expressed the use of this practice estimated that their students read between one and three novels a year along with the selections offered in the basal series. A primary teacher in a mixed socioeconomic school stated, "I think it is important to learn about literature. However, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) is not directed towards younger children or any real knowledge about literature." At the time of the interviews, close to the end of the first nine-week grading period of the school year, no novels had been initiated or read in any of the respondents' classrooms.

Questionnaire respondents were relatively evenly divided as to their espoused beliefs concerning the use of graded reading schemes in the instruction of literacy. However, interview participants were quite emphatic about their daily use of the basal text, a commercially produced program consisting of a graded reading text with controlled vocabulary.

According to the data collected through the questionnaire, the majority of respondents agreed with the statement that an effective literacy program combined a graded reading scheme and authentic texts. Those teachers who were interviewed appeared to agree with this statement. However, it should be noted that the term *basal reader* was used frequently in conversation when interview participants discussed aspects of reading instruction practice and materials utilized. Novels, authentic text, or literature had to be elicited through specific questioning. None of the interviewed participants were currently utilizing authentic texts in their instruction.

Phonics Instruction

　　All interviewed subjects discussed the daily use of *phonics instruction*. Surveyed respondents were in agreement espousing the belief that phonics instruction was necessary for beginning readers. In several schools, interviewed subjects stated that phonics instruction was "mandated" by the administration in the form of leveled workbooks. This was especially true in schools with populations of low or mixed socioeconomic students. The workbook was to be used on a daily basis regardless of the adopted spelling program.

　　Often teachers referred to the term "decoding" to denote the use of phonic skills. Primary teachers stated the necessity of phonics instruction in the development of successful readers. It was determined that in all interviewed respondents' classrooms, phonics was taught as a separate entity, removed from the context of story vocabulary, spelling, or other word analysis skills. Questionnaire respondents espoused similar beliefs concerning the use of phonics. The majority agreed with the importance of phonics instruction for beginning readers.

Vocabulary Instruction

　　All interview participants when discussing strategies used in the teaching of literacy referred to the term *vocabulary instruction*. Vocabulary appeared to be defined as "words recommended by the commercial basal series." Often vocabulary were correlated and presented through the stories introduced to students. All the teachers interviewed discussed vocabulary and the practice of teaching it during introductory lessons. Often vocabulary words were identified and analyzed for their phonetic patterns. Teachers had students alphabetize, define, and use vocabulary in sentences and original

paragraph writing. All those interviewed stated a belief that vocabulary was "an essential" and important aspect of their literacy practice.

Several of the more experienced teachers regarded the practice of teaching vocabulary from basal series as necessary but questioned the teaching of phonetic patterned words "out of context" of the stories read by students. Several teachers indicated that vocabulary was also gleaned from relevant "holidays, happenings, or content material. Questionnaire respondents also were divided as to their espoused belief concerning the instruction of vocabulary in isolation. However, they did agree that "words and definitions" should be taught to aid in the development of students' sight vocabulary.   Although responses on the questionnaire and those garnered through interviews indicated that teachers are unsure whether vocabulary should be taught in isolation, there appears to be a consensus that vocabulary taught in this manner would transfer when utilized in the reading process.

Reading Skills

The teaching of s*kills* was mentioned and discussed by all participants. Interviewed teachers stated that the teaching of "discrete" skills was necessary. Surveyed respondents espoused the belief that an effective literacy program should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills necessary for the development of successful reading strategies. Interview participants listed specific skills such as understanding of the plot, story mapping, identification of story elements, and identification and understanding of vocabulary. Eight of the nine teachers stated that the skills taught were culled from the suggested lessons provided by the basal reading series. The lone stand out stressed that she taught skills that "her experience has found to be important." When

asked to specify the skills she felt were "important" all the aforementioned skills were identified. All the interviewed teachers made it a point to inform and "assure" the researcher that they instructed reading using practices mandated by Miami-Dade County's Comprehensive Reading Program.

All participants stated that emphasis was placed on the instruction of specific reading skills due to their annual appearance on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). All teachers interviewed mentioned the test and its implications to the teaching of discrete skills in literacy. "I don't have much choice in what I teach. The lessons I teach must lead to the FCAT" was a statement made by teachers interviewed regardless of their experiential level.

Language Arts Skills

When discussing *language arts skills*, respondents differentiated between those necessary for successful reading and other skills used in the literacy process. The teaching of grammar and spelling were mentioned as separate from the teaching of skills necessary for reading fluency. The instruction of language arts skills, grammar, and spelling often followed similar patterns. Although a majority of respondents to the questionnaire disagreed with the statement that the use of reading vocabulary in spelling instruction was necessary for successful literacy acquisition, reading vocabulary was utilized by six of the nine subjects interviewed as part of their students' weekly spelling list. Phonetically patterned words were also included in spelling lists. Four of the teachers used commercially produced spelling and grammar texts. Five of the interviewed teachers used lists provided by "curriculum experts" or lists of their own creation.

All the interviewed teachers taught grammar and spelling as separate skills removed from reading instruction. Surveyed respondents agreed that grammar and spelling should be taught as discrete skills to their student population. They appear to believe that words taught through spelling transferred to students' writing. Inventive spelling was encouraged both by those teachers surveyed and interviewed participants.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud was a practice purportedly used in all the classrooms of those subjects interviewed. Seven of the nine teachers interviewed stated that they read out loud daily to their students. Five teachers used the basal story. Four teachers read a literature selection out loud to students. Students did not read along with the teacher in the latter instance. Seven teachers read the basal story out loud to their students the first time it was introduced. Two teachers, both teaching intermediate grade students, did not feel it necessary to read the basal stories to their students.

All the primary teachers interviewed felt reading out loud was a necessary practice. However, students reading out loud were a practice that did not occur daily in the classrooms of those teachers interviewed. Two of the teachers rarely had their students read out loud. The remaining seven teachers tried to have students read out loud a minimum of twice a week. This would occur in small groups with classmates or in a total group with the teacher's guidance. Surveyed respondents overwhelming espoused the belief that reading aloud should occur daily.

Grouping

Grouping, as defined by the interview participants, was ability grouping. All teachers stated that they utilized the practice of "ability" grouping as mandated by the

Comprehensive Reading Program adopted by the county in 1998. Surveyed respondents espoused the belief that ability grouping should be used in the instruction of literacy. All teachers interviewed stated that they had a high, medium, and low group. Often these groupings were determined by assessments given during the initial days of the school year rather than the Scholastic Reading Inventory scores as suggested by the district.

One of the beginning teachers questioned the practice of grouping as mandated by the county. She professed a concern that while she was working with an "ability" group, the other students were completing what she referred to as "busy" work. Three other teachers felt that homogenous grouping was necessary to more effectively teach the variety of students in the classroom. The remaining teachers questioned the practice, preferring to place students together in temporary groups dependent on specific skill weaknesses as detected and noted by the teacher.

Interview participants were asked whether cooperative learning was utilized in their classroom instruction. All stated that the practice was used. However, when asked to explain the use of cooperative learning the examples given were those of working in pairs rather than the classic definition of cooperative learning and its competitive component (Slavin, 1991). The majority of surveyed respondents espoused the belief that cooperative learning should be used in literacy instruction.

Comprehension

The construct of *comprehension* is referred to in each interview that was conducted. Often practices such as the identification of story elements, main idea, inference, and answering questions in complete sentences were identified as integral to

the teaching of comprehension. Comprehension was "instructed" after the basal story was read aloud to or with students.

Interviewed participants varied in their opinions concerning the gearing of instruction so that students would be familiar with the techniques necessary to comprehend and answer questions utilizing the text in a manner that would prepare them for the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Teachers with less than four years of experience were quite concerned that their instructional practices in the area of comprehension provide experiences that would lead to success with the FCAT. However, they also hoped that at some point in time they would be able use practices that had been suggested in their college courses. Much of what they had been taught had taken a "back seat" to the demands of their administrators and the district to excel in the assessed areas.

Teachers who had over twenty years of experience stated negative perceptions of the testing mandated by the state and county and how it was "supposed to affect" their instructional practice. They assured the researcher that the FCAT and SRI did not influence their instruction in the area of comprehension to "a great extent." They continued to utilize strategies that they had found successful throughout their years of teaching.

All teachers stated that comprehension appeared to be a weakness among many of what they defined as "low students." These students were often "pulled" into smaller groups to work on "answering comprehension questions in complete sentences" and receive instruction as to how to "find answers in the text." All teachers interviewed

stated that they regularly assessed vocabulary and comprehension to gauge students'
progress.

Eclectic

When asked what instructional model they most identified with, all nine subjects
interviewed stated that they were *eclectic*, combining both skills based and whole
language practices. Several of the more experienced teachers who were interviewed did
not want to be identified with the whole language model explaining that they had "always
believed in the importance of phonics" in the teaching of decoding. All three of the
beginning teachers interviewed had hoped to teach in a more thematic way incorporating
other subjects into the teaching of literacy. The majority of surveyed respondents
espoused the belief that they adhered to an eclectic model of instruction.

Due to the emphasis for students to succeed on the FCAT, interview participants
appear to follow a structured schedule of instruction in their classrooms. All described
similar organization and sequence as to how skills were taught and introduced.
Selections from the basal were introduced through vocabulary and discussions of
background knowledge. Stories were then read aloud to and with students in the primary
grades. Intermediate teachers felt that their students were capable of "reading
independently." Students were then given skill work pages and exercises to complete as
suggested by the teacher's manual for the basal. Often this was followed by questions
that entailed the writing of complete sentence answers and eliciting information from the
story.

The process of instruction utilizing one story from the basal lasted a week for all
teachers interviewed. After describing the instructional process to the researcher a

teacher who had between five and 20 years of experience stated, "I consider myself an eclectic teacher. I like some of the aspects of whole language, such as the use of literature, but skills are important too." When asked if instruction using literature differed from that previously described, answers were similar. Teachers appear to use the structured schedule modeled in the basal series to instruct when utilizing literature. The difference, as several teachers pointed out, lies in the "amount of creative project work" to which students are exposed. At the time of the interviews, which occurred near the end of the first nine-week grading period, none of the teachers had begun to use literature as a basis for instruction. Nor did it appear that literature based instruction would be implemented in the "near future due to the demands of mandated testing."

Research

All the subjects interviewed stated that they did not read *research* nor did they believe that *research* played a role in their choice of classroom practice. Several beginning teachers assured the researcher that they followed the "research recommended by the county." A beginning teacher from a mixed socioeconomic school stated, "I don't really read research but do what Dade County says to do." An experienced teacher of 17 years who taught in a mixed socioeconomic school asserted, "research does not affect my teaching now." She clarified that "research formulated the way I teach." She believed that how she had begun her teaching of literacy during her initial years of experience was the "best way to teach."

The answers elicited from the interview participants concerning the variable of research and its application differed from the surveyed respondents. The majority of the latter espoused the belief that they applied research to their classroom practice

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"sometimes." They stated that university courses and the reading of professional literature affected their instructional practice. Research had "strongly" influenced their classroom practice. The interview participants did not affirm these espoused beliefs. All nine-interview participants were emphatic that research played no role in their selection of literacy instructional practices.

Mandates

When asked whether state or district *mandates* affected the practices used in the classrooms, those teachers with less than four years of experience and between five and twenty years of experience replied affirmatively. Surveyed respondents agreed that their instructional practices were affected by district mandates. Teachers with more than 20 years of experience and were interview participants stated that they tended to ignore mandates, completing only demanded paper work and records.

Beginning teachers and those who possessed between five and 20 years of experience answered affirmatively that mandates affected their selection of instructional practices. One seventeen-year veteran stated, "Mandates have affected much of my teaching in the last couple of years." Teachers interviewed with over 20 years of experience stated that they were aware of mandates but chose to ignore them when selecting instructional practices in their classroom. They were cognizant of the need to complete certain paperwork and assessments. They insisted that mandates did not "dictate" the way they taught in their classrooms. Rather, their years of experience and "knowing" what works were the basis for their instructional decisions. A subject with over 27 years of experience assured the researcher that "…no matter what Dade County brings in, we're going to do what we know works. And that's the bottom line."

Ironically, the majority of information concerning instruction utilized in the classroom related by the interviewed participants reflected mandated practices stated in the Comprehensive Reading Program adopted by Miami-Dade County and now in its third year of implementation.

<div align="center">Summary of Qualitative Analyses</div>

Interviews were conducted with nine purposively selected subjects. The subjects interviewed represented a variety of degree levels, experiential levels, and taught within schools that represented the three socioeconomic levels represented in the study. Content and manifest analyses techniques were utilized in determining the underlying themes of the qualitative data. Analysis of the frequency of a variety of terms determined several themes and constructs.

Basal reader, phonics instruction, vocabulary instruction, skills, reading aloud, language arts, and *grouping for instruction* were terms that frequently appeared in each interview. Constructs such as *comprehension, eclectic, research,* and *mandates* were evident throughout the interview data collected. These are discussed as to how they relate to the survey information collected. The information given by the interview participants varied from the information gleaned from the surveyed sample. These discrepancies will be further discussed in Chapter V.

A majority of interview participants utilized a commercially produced basal reading series as the basis for the skills instructed in the classroom. From these series came the bulk of the instructional practice used to instruct students. Teachers instructed vocabulary gleaned from the basal text, along with phonetically based patterned words.

The majority of interview participants discussed the use of commercial published phonics instruction programs in the form of a workbook. Reading comprehension was considered to be a series of discrete skills taught in context with the basal reader story covered with the students. These included an understanding of the story plot, characters, sequence, and author's purpose. Language arts skills, grammar and spelling, were discrete skills taught separately from reading. The majority of teachers utilized reading vocabulary as a part of the weekly spelling word list to be "learned" by students.

All the interview participants read aloud to their students in some capacity on a daily basis. The materials used differed depending on the grade level taught. All interview participants stated the use of ability grouping as a method of organizing their instruction. This grouping consisted of a "high," "middle," and "low" groups designated by the level of previous skill acquisition determined by a mandated evaluation adopted by Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

All the interview participants stated that they did not utilize research in determining the instructional practices utilized in the classroom environment. Several "relied" on the school system's "research" which they assumed must have been used in developing the Comprehensive Reading Program adopted by the county during the last three years. The majority of the interview participants stated that district and state mandates did have an effect on their instructional decisions and essentially dictated the practices often used in their classrooms. However, teachers who had been employed for over twenty years stated that they "rejected mandates" when selecting instructional practices utilized in their classrooms. Instead, they relied on those "practices that had worked over the years."

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study was an inquiry into teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. There is a consensus that research should inform instruction. Teachers should be knowledgeable professionals guided by both theory and research (Gunderson, 1997). Yet, the assumption has been made that teachers rarely turn to research literature in developing effective instructional programs in the classroom environment.

According to government mandate and policies, it is necessary to improve literacy achievement in the United States. Recommendations have been made that "scientific research-based" programs should be implemented to facilitate effective literacy instruction (Goodman, 1998, p. 29). Studies carried out in the early 1990s determined that many practitioners adhere to a model of direct instruction. In the latter portion of the decade, much has been politicized concerning the "best" approach and practice to the instruction of literacy. Recent research has determined that teachers may be eclectic in their literacy practices (Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, & Duffy-Hester, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the acquisition and instruction of reading and language arts, organization of instructional programs, influences and forces affecting instructional practice, model of instruction, and the application of research to practice. There was a concern as to whether teachers' espoused beliefs would significantly differ depending on their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience.

It was predicted that although the research literature recommends an eclectic approach to the instruction of literacy and a turn in this direction has been noted by some researchers, teachers' espoused instructional beliefs would demonstrate a loyalty to the traditional skills based direct instruction model. This conclusion had often been found in previous research studies (Chall, 1996). It was predicted that questionnaire results would reveal that teachers seldom rely on research to determine literacy strategies and practices utilized in the classroom environment.

To this end, it was decided to survey elementary teachers involved in the instruction of literacy using a questionnaire adapted from previously existing instruments. The *Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire* consisted of three sections. The first section was designed to elicit general demographic information from study participants. The second section of the questionnaire contained nineteen questions that surveyed teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. The third section consisted of nine questions concerning teachers' beliefs about forces and influences affecting instructional practice. Multiple-choice questions that surveyed teachers' espoused beliefs as to the instructional model with which they align themselves and research and its application to the classroom practice were also included in the third section. Practitioners responded to the questionnaire items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

A purposive sample of approximately five hundred practitioners was selected from the population of currently employed instructional personnel within the Miami-Dade County Public School System. Of five hundred questionnaires mailed out to the

eighteen selected school sites, 242 or 48%, were returned within the two deadline periods. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with nine selected participants.

In analyzing the frequency of responses, the majority of questionnaire respondents appear to favor those practices that are recommended by a direct skills instruction model. This was true of interview participants as well. Disagreement occurred with those questionnaire items that were statements espousing beliefs related to whole language pedagogy. Respondents were divided as to their beliefs concerning how literacy was acquired, methods of instructing students in word recognition skills, and whether invented spelling reinforced subsequent negative habits in other areas of literacy instruction. There was disagreement as to whether spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary were essential in successful literacy instruction.

Statistical analyses were performed to determine if a relationship existed between the espoused beliefs of teachers and their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Statistical analyses were also performed to determine if significant differences in teachers' espoused beliefs existed based on the factors noted.

Findings

For discussion purposes, the results from the quantitative and qualitative analyses will be combined to draw conclusions and answer the research and subsidiary research questions. Data obtained from interviews will be used to compare, clarify, and corroborate questionnaire respondents' espoused beliefs. Quantitative and qualitative

findings will then be discussed in comparison to recommended instructional practices found in the research literature.

<u>Research Question</u>

What are teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy?

Overall, questionnaire respondents and interview participants believed in the formal teaching of literacy skills. This included direct instruction of reading, grammar, spelling, and composition skills. As described by those teachers who were interviewed, the teaching of literacy skills takes place in isolation with little attempt at relating what is being instructed to other areas of the curriculum. Gove (1993) referred to this type of instruction as the "bottom-up" literacy instructional model. In the "bottom-up" approach, the teaching of grapho-phonic knowledge is combined with the teaching of reading for meaning. All children move through the same learning sequence.

Respondents believed that the instruction of vocabulary "builds" children's sight vocabulary. They favored the teaching of phonics to beginning readers. There is a substantial body of research that supports these teaching practices (Adams, 1990; Pressley et al., 1996). Commercial reading programs with controlled vocabulary appeared to be respondents' material of choice in the instruction of literacy. Chall (1996) came to the same conclusion in her original 1967 study and subsequent follow-up. Questionnaire respondents stated that they favored combining commercial reading programs with authentic texts. It was elicited from interview participants that although this was a practice they espoused, after more than two months into the school year, authentic text had yet to be introduced in any of their classrooms.

Respondents believed that fluency is a necessary component of comprehension. Regular assessment of literacy is a necessity. They read aloud to their students on a daily basis. It was indicated that words learned through the direct teaching of spelling do transfer to students' writing. Ability grouping was a necessary component in organizing the teaching of literacy. Participants espoused the belief that cooperative learning should be used in the teaching of literacy.

Respondents believed that reading professional literature had influenced their beliefs about literacy and motivated changes in their instructional practices. Participating in university classes had affected their practices. The majority of practitioners had read a text or journal which discussed literacy within the past year and attended some type of conference or workshop which was literacy based.

Questionnaire respondents were divided as to their belief concerning how children acquired literacy. There appeared to be a difference in beliefs as to how students should be taught word recognition skills or whether invented spelling reinforces subsequent negative habits in other areas of literacy instruction. There was disagreement as to whether spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary were essential in successful literacy instruction.

Subsidiary Questions One and Five

Are teachers' espoused instructional beliefs likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

No evidence appears to exist as to whether teachers' espoused instructional beliefs concerning literacy differ significantly depending on students' socioeconomic

status, extent of teachers' educational background or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Respondents' total scores on items eight through twenty-six of the questionnaire related to this question.

The data indicated that teachers, regardless of their experience, degree, or schools' SES level, agreed with the majority of the questionnaire items that were stated practices of the direct instruction model. Teacher training during the 70s and 80s essentially perpetuated direct skills based instruction methodology (Chall, 1996). The practices of questionnaire respondents and interview participants reflected this training in that most appear to utilize models of reading instruction that emphasize strategies and materials demonstrating sequenced skill development (Adams, 1990; Allington, 1997). The most recent research literature recommends that practitioners use and adapt a variety of instructional models and materials to provide effective instruction for students (Duffy & Hoffman, 1999). This was not found to be true when analyzing the data collected through this study.

Questionnaire item 8 (Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills) represented a stated belief of those who follow the tenets of whole language pedagogy. Respondents' espoused beliefs pertaining to the acquisition of literacy appear as divided as the pedagogies found in the research literature. Reid (1993) summarized the "natural" position on this issue stating that reading parallels the acquisition of spoken language. Both draw on an innate ability to discover how language works both aurally and visually (p. 23). Thus, learning to read is considered a "natural" process with an emphasis on meaning (Riley, 1999, p. 218). Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) summarized the pedagogy of emergent literacy so often

mentioned in research during the 1990s. Children grow into reading and writing with "no real beginning or ending point" (Snow et al., 1998, p. 15). There is essentially no "right" sequence, in that literacy develops concurrently and interrelatedly.

The opposing view is described as the code-emphasis approach, which characteristically focuses on the linking of sounds with their letterforms. Adams (1990) summed up the current research evidence stating that skillful readers are able to concentrate on meaning because they have learned to process words effortlessly. Although teachers involved in this study appeared to be divided as to how literacy is acquired, the majority supported the use of practices and strategies that follow the code emphasis approach.

Strauss, Ravid, Zelcer, and Berliner (1999) wrote that most teachers profess a basic belief that knowledge is possessed by the teacher, external from children's minds. For learning to occur the content must enter children's minds. Strauss et al. (1999) explained that teachers believe "good pedagogy" involves serving up knowledge in chunk sizes or reducing the complexity of the material so that children will be able to understand and link the material to previously existing knowledge (p. 263). In the teacher's mind, it becomes imperative to formally instruct skills and content material. This may further explain the discrepancies found in the divided responses indicated by study participants. Riley (1999) attempted to bring a consensus to the expanse between the conflicting pedagogies previously mentioned in stating that in order to learn to read and write successfully, young children have to acquire an appreciation of the entire process in all its complexity.

Respondents were divided as to their beliefs concerning whether readers should be encouraged to guess upon the pronunciation of unknown words. Pressley (2000) wrote that the more skilled the decoding capability of students, the more conscious capacity is left over for the comprehension of the text. Scientific evidence appears to favor the graphemic-phonemic cues as primary in skilled decoding (Nicholson, 1997). However, according to the whole-language perspective, meaning cues are considered more critical in decoding than the use of a graphemic-phonemic cuing system (Goodman, 1998).

Respondents agreed that fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension. The National Reading Panel Report (2000b) emphasized the importance of fluency as a "critical factor necessary for reading comprehension" (p. 11). Despite these findings, the report concluded that fluency is often neglected in the classroom. If text reading is a laborious and inefficient activity, it becomes difficult for students to remember what has been read and to relate the ideas expressed to her/his background knowledge. The NRP further suggested an instructional approach referred to as guided repeated oral reading. This approach encourages students to reread passages orally with "systematic and explicit guidance and feedback" from the teacher (National Reading Panel Report, 2000b, p. 12). It was concluded after an analysis of 364 studies relevant to the effects of guided oral reading instructional practices that a significant and positive impact on word recognition, fluency, and comprehension occurred at all grade level ranges. These results applied to both competent readers and those with reading difficulties.

Respondents and interview participants overwhelming agreed with the practice of reading aloud to students on a daily basis. The research literature supports this practice but preferably when guided by the practitioner (Allington, 1997; Baumann et al., 2000; Chall, 1996). Subjects interviewed for the study admitted that although they read aloud to their students on a daily basis, this did not necessarily hold true for their students. Intermediate teachers felt that their students were capable of reading basal stories silently and independently. Primary teachers expressed the importance of rereading a story more than once with their students. They encouraged students to read to each other or in small groups. Rarely was students' oral reading "guided" by the teacher.

Respondents disagreed with the concept that spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary are essential for successful literacy instruction. All interviewed participants stated that reading vocabulary was used as the basis of the weekly spelling list. However, patterned words were infused into the instruction as well. Usually "curriculum experts" suggested these words or a commercial program adopted by the school administration.

Templeton and Morris (2000) summarized the most recent research on the teaching of spelling and phonemic morphology concluding that for most students inductive and exploratory approaches to spelling instruction appear appropriate. However, for a growing number of "struggling" spellers a more deductive, systematic, direct approach is preferred. Participants that were interviewed revealed that a direct, systematic approach appears to be utilized in their classrooms for the instruction of spelling but often with words that are arbitrarily selected from the commercial reading program teacher's manual rather than a published spelling text.

Respondents were divided as to their belief whether children's use of inventive spelling reinforces bad habits. Templeton and Morris (2000) wrote that longitudinal studies of children's spelling development have concluded that for all children in the early years of schooling, invented spelling should be encouraged. Once students have begun to explore spelling on a regular basis, students should be encouraged to look for patterns.

Questionnaire respondents and interview participants were in agreement that grammar should be instructed in an explicit manner. The majority of teachers used commercially produced programs and workbooks. Whole language pedagogy discourages the use of a systematic instructional program for the teaching of grammar and writing skills. Rather, these skills should be infused into instruction through the use of authentic text (Goodman, 1998).

The majority of respondents espoused the belief that cooperative learning should be practiced in the teaching of literacy. Participants who were interviewed corroborated this. However, the activities described as cooperative learning were essentially paired experiences in which students worked together on an assignment. The competitive aspect of cooperative learning was not discussed by any of the interview respondents (Slavin, 1991).

Questionnaire respondents espoused the belief that ability grouping should be used in organizing classroom literacy instruction. Ability grouping was used in all classrooms of those teachers interviewed. Interview participants followed the traditional organizational practice of grouping according to perceived reading level. This resulted in a low, middle, and high group. Placement in groups was based on some type of

standardized test score. Several interview participants questioned the practice but used it on a daily basis regardless of their doubts as to its effectiveness.

Researchers believe that long-term ability grouping is detrimental to reading development (Allington, 1998; Hiebart, 1983). Ability group practices usually lead to the low group being designated for more drill work rather than higher quality reading instruction. Participants often develop negative self-concepts and dislike reading. A middle group designation tends to be treated in a mediocre manner, experiencing similar problems as the low group students (Allington, 1998; Hiebart, 1983).

Ability grouping is a mandated component of Miami-Dade County's Comprehensive Reading Program (Miami-Dade Public Schools, 1998) possibly explaining the overwhelming tendency of practitioners to adopt this practice for use in the classroom environment regardless of their own beliefs. This confirms the research literature, which reiterated that the primary change strategy utilized in the curriculum development field continues to be what Chin and Benne (1989) defined as power coercive. Primarily, impetus for change is top-down requiring little effort from practitioners in determining how or why they might want to change (Klein, 1991).

Klein (1991) seriously questioned the belief that significant change would occur in practitioners' instructional practice through strategies that impose curriculum upon them. Practitioners must be directly involved in proposals for change rather than simple technicians waiting to carry out orders (Klein, 1991). It is imperative that they be given opportunities and time to examine their practices and how they relate to mandates and available research for effective changes to take place.

Subsidiary Questions Two and Six

Are teachers 'espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction likely to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

Teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting instruction do not appear to differ depending on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. Questionnaire items twenty-seven through thirty-seven related to this research question.

Respondents were divided in their belief as to whether supervising and mentoring novice teachers has influenced their literacy practice. In the Miami-Dade County School System, only teachers who have been certified in clinical supervision are assigned interns or given the opportunity to mentor novice teachers. It would appear that the sample contained a number of teachers who had not been involved in teacher mentoring experiences due to the requirements mandated by the county.

A majority of respondents perceived that district mandates had strongly influenced their choice of literacy teaching practices. Wragg et al. (1998) came to a similar conclusion. Allington and Wolmsley (1995) and Flippo (1999) warned that attempts to improve literacy instruction by issuing mandates or "tightening the controls on classroom practices" only serve to cause "ill will" and disempower teachers. Interviews corroborated teachers' frustration in that without mandates, several participants felt they would have had "the freedom to teach the way I was trained to teach." Too often teachers become frustrated when practices are mandated on the basis of hierarchical judgments about what works best in classrooms. This type of "top-down"

decision making is too often motivated by a disbelief in practitioners' knowledge and ability to choose or invent their own methods depending on the instructional situation (Reynolds, 2000).

The majority of questionnaire respondents espoused the belief that research had strongly influenced their "thinking about the teaching of literacy." They applied research "sometimes" in the selection of instructional practices used in the classroom environment. However, interview participants did not corroborate this viewpoint. The research literature appears to support the theory that teacher educators have essentially not turned to research to develop fuller conceptualizations of their work (Calderhead, 1993). Others have reported that few educators read research or use its findings in conceiving their work and instructional practices (Börg, 1987). Based on the espoused beliefs reflected in the questionnaire data and the responses of those participants involved in the interviews, a majority of participants in the study favor the use of a variety of instructional practices that are rarely recommended in current research literature.

Overall, respondents appeared oblivious to the incongruities evident in their espoused beliefs. Argyris and Schön (1974) discussed this type of incongruence as an incompatibility in teachers' espoused beliefs or theories-in-action and their theories-in-use. To meliorate this incongruence it was further suggested that individuals learn how to construct models of their theories-in-use and confront inconsistencies through discussion of their observable behaviors. It is the goal of this process for the individual to become more effective in analyzing their own behaviors and "be open to possibilities for change" (Argyris & Schön, 1974).

University education classes present an environment where self-awareness, practice, and questioning can take place, all valuable to allowing teachers an environment where theories-in-use can be examined and "practiced." Teachers appear to lack the ability to conceptualize the major components required in effective curriculum decision making (Goodlad, 1991). Goodlad (1991) and Griffin (1991) advocated the development of partnerships between schools and universities. It is hoped that these relationships would then provide the support necessary for practitioners to carry out their responsibility as contributors to the development of effective practice and decision making in all areas of curriculum and instruction.

Subsidiary Questions Three and Seven

Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused model of instruction that they practice and students' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

Over 76% of the respondents considered themselves eclectic in their instructional practice. However, based on the responses to the survey, the vast majority demonstrated a more favorable attitude towards skill based direct instructional practices. This was supported by the explanations given by interview participants. Teachers were specific in the practices used to instruct literacy, which included reading and the language arts. Practices utilized were skill based. Instruction was direct with little interaction on the part of students.

Research literature has reflected that a majority of teachers share a balanced, eclectic perspective towards the instruction of literacy (Baumann et al., 2000). However, this study appears to demonstrate that although teachers perceive of themselves as

eclectic in nature, they continue to espouse beliefs that primarily reflect a skills based

direct instruction pedagogy. Chall's (1996) conclusions in her original study undertaken

in 1967 and revised several times since that decade bear similar results.

Since 1967, Chall (1996) has reiterated that teachers' methodology is essentially

derived from the commercially produced materials they use in the classroom. Interview

participants in this study purported the use of story webbing, comprehension skills, and

work attack skills on a daily basis. These practices are supported through commercially

produced workbooks and skill worksheets.   Commercial basal programs were the

material of choice from which direct teaching of literacy skills occurred. Although all the

interview participants expressed an interest in the use of literature to supplement the basal

program, none had yet initiated its use in the classroom at the time of the interviews.

Subsidiary Questions Four and Eight

Is there a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and

its application to practice and schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers'

educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience?

Over 85% of teachers responded that research "sometimes" played a part in the

selection of instructional practice utilized in the classroom. Interview participants did not

substantiate this espoused belief reported by the surveyed sample. Participants who were

interviewed were quite emphatic in their belief that research played "no part" in their

instructional decisions. One beginning teacher offered the explanation that she figured

the county was familiar with "current research" and advocated instructional practices and

materials suggested by researchers. An experienced teacher, with almost two decades of

experience, offered that research was important to her as a beginning teacher but no longer.

The espoused belief reflected by the interview participants was supported by the research literature. Börg (1987) reported that few educators read research or used its findings in their work. Previous studies found that teachers rarely read or applied research to their classroom situations (Börg, 1987). It has been theorized that teachers shy away from research because it is often regarded as an euphemism for academics, many of whom haven't been in a classroom for decades, telling teachers what to do (Bliss, 1991).

It is a general assumption that individuals strive to behave effectively and competently. Valid information informing practitioners that they are not doing so should serve to motivate and direct them towards the change process. Theoretically, this should have been the situation concerning effective literacy instruction. For several decades, federal, state, and district curriculum policy makers have accused literacy practitioners of inadequately providing effective instruction. Resulting curricular mandates appear to have created an environment in education in which change has rarely occurred effectively. Klein (1991) questioned the continued tendency to impose curriculum changes through a top-down approach. Teachers have become only technicians of change, planned and mandated by the politicians and academicians whose perceptions, goals, and actions may not be shared or understood by researchers or practitioners.

Argyris and Schön (1974) cautioned that practitioners who are accused of less than effective behavior become defensive, denying a need for improvement or change. They offered suggestions for facilitating effective development in learning to implement

changes in behaviors and practices. Throughout the process it is integral that dilemmas of behavioral inconsistencies be revealed through an environment of free and informed choice. Practitioners need to be allowed to select their own objectives that Argyris and Schön (1974) conclude should "challenge one's capacities" rather then simply learning to integrate and adapt mandated objectives and standards into their instructional practice (p. 88). Freedom of choice allows practitioners to feel "internally committed" to the change process and improvement of practice (p. 89). Ideally, these kinds of opportunities will generate practitioners' motivation toward growth and an awareness of the difference between the practices they use and those that are effective in the instruction of literacy or any curricular subject matter.

<p style="text-align:center">Conclusions</p>

Argyris and Schön (1974) wrote that when we are asked how we would behave under certain circumstances, the answer usually given is our espoused theory of action. It is the theory to which we give our "allegiance" and which we communicate to others (p. 6). The purpose of this study was to gather data as to teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. To achieve this end, it was decided to survey elementary level practitioners utilizing a self-administered questionnaire.

Based on the responses of the participants, the results of this study appear to indicate that teachers may espouse the belief that they are eclectic in their instruction of literacy but appear to essentially follow a direct instruction skill based model. Responses on questionnaire items that examined teachers' espoused instructional beliefs reported a strong propensity towards the direct instruction of reading and language arts skills.

Questionnaire respondents strongly agreed with the systematic teaching of skills including vocabulary, phonics, and comprehension. They continue to rely heavily on the use of published reading programs containing controlled vocabulary usage. Practices and strategies used in the classroom environment are primarily gleaned from the district's mandated reading curricular framework.

Interview participants discussed similar beliefs. Instructional practices utilized in the classroom environment varied little regardless of their schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience.

Overall, teachers responded that research was applied "sometimes" in selecting instructional practices used in the classroom environment. Although, practitioners may espouse the belief that they use research-supported practices such as cooperative learning and instruction through the use of literature and content, interview participants did not report use of these practices at the present time

This study was also designed to ascertain teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences affecting their decisions concerning instruction. It would appear that a majority of teachers believe that professional literature, university training, and district mandates influence and may significantly determine their choice of instructional practice. Teachers appear divided as to whether mentoring and peer discussion have influenced their instructional practice.

Duffy and Hoffman (1999) wrote that effective literacy instructors combine methodologies and adapt programs and materials. Generally speaking, the results of the questionnaire indicate that teachers' espoused theories of instruction essentially follow a skill based direct teaching model regardless of the socioeconomic status of their schools

or extent of their educational background and classroom experience. Those teachers involved in the interview process appear loyal to the teacher's manual and the lessons and methodology it supplies with little melding of other pedagogies. Much of the information that interview participants related deviated little from the practices and strategies mandated by the Miami-Dade County School System (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 1998).

The research literature has reflected that an effective literacy program requires a variety of approaches (Reutzel, 1996). Leu and Kinzer (1999) concluded that "children learn best when teachers take a balanced approach" (p. 11). However, researchers have been unable to cite existing research antecedent to substantiate teachers' use of an eclectic literacy instructional approach (Chall, 1996; Shanahan & Neuman, 1997). Although the respondents in this study appeared to espouse the belief that they are essentially eclectic in their selection of literacy practices, their overall responses to the questionnaire items reflected a strong disposition towards skill-based practices and pedagogy. Interview participants related to the researcher that they rely on commercial basal series, phonetic spelling lists infused with reading vocabulary, and ability grouping, instructional practices, which are skill based, and teacher directed. These results parallel those of other research conducted by Chall (1996), Duffy (1997), and Elmore and McLaughlin (1988).

Methodological Implications

Mixed methodology was used in this study for several purposes. The use of quantitative and qualitative methodology would allow the researcher the opportunity to

examine and compare espoused beliefs through the use of numerical and narrative data.

Areas of agreement and disagreement could then be identified and analyzed. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) refer to this type of data collection as a "parallel/simultaneous mixed method design" (p. 47). By using a multimethod approach, it was hoped that the researcher would be able to further protect against social desirability bias or possible researcher bias often found in survey research (Baumann et al., 2000).

Another purpose of using the multimethod approach was the researchers' intent to obtain a better, more substantive picture of the current status of teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. Triangulation techniques would hopefully improve the quality of the inferences made from the findings. Each method utilized would reveal broader aspects of the problem under study and further delineate discrepancies and incongruities between the quantitative and qualitative data.

<center>Recommendations for Future Research</center>

It is important to distinguish espoused theories of action from theories-in-use. These are defined as the actual theories that govern our actions as observed by others (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Too often we are not aware of the incompatibility of the two theories. Argyris and Schön (1974) warn that we cannot learn what someone's theory-in-use is simply by asking. This study has served to initiate the process of gathering information concerning teachers' espoused instructional beliefs. The results of this study can serve as a starting point for further qualitative research which attempts to identify and compare teachers' espoused instructional beliefs or theories-in-action and their theories-in-use or actual instructional practices observed in the classroom environment.

The findings raise a question as to what teachers say they believe and what they are actually observed implementing in their classrooms. Argyris and Schön (1974) remind us that observations are tantamount in constructing and garnering understanding as to what practitioners do in situational instances. Further research which includes observations of teachers' instructional practices implemented in the classroom environment would serve to clarify the congruency between teachers' espoused instructional beliefs and their actual theories-of-practice. The following are some recommendations for further studies in this area:

1. A study where elementary teachers are observed as to which instructional strategies and practices they utilize in the classroom setting and are then interviewed to compare observed behaviors to their espoused instructional beliefs.

2. A study where elementary teachers are interviewed as to their espoused instructional beliefs and observed specifically as to how these beliefs are implemented as practice in the classroom environment.

3. A study contrasting primary and intermediate level elementary teachers' espoused instructional beliefs and observing how they implement their beliefs into practice in the classroom environment.

4. A study in which workshops are conducted to train teachers in effective literacy instructional practices with follow-up observations as to whether and how these practices are utilized in the classroom environment.

5. A study which compares the academic achievement of students whose

teachers have identified themselves as following an eclectic instructional model to the academic achievement of students whose teachers have identified themselves as practicing a skills based model of instruction.

6. A study that compares the espoused instructional beliefs and observed classroom practices of elementary and secondary school practitioners in other subject areas such as mathematics, the sciences, social sciences, or the fine arts.

Summary

This study examined teachers' espoused beliefs concerning the instruction of literacy. No significant evidence appears to exist to indicate that teachers' espoused instructional beliefs differ based on schools' socioeconomic status, extent of teachers' educational background, or extent of teachers' classroom experience. No significant difference was found between the independent variables and teachers' espoused beliefs concerning forces and influences that affect instruction. There appears to be no relationship between teachers' espoused model of instruction that they practice and the independent variables. There appears to be no evidence of a relationship between teachers' espoused beliefs concerning research and its application to practice and the independent variables.

Overall, teachers demonstrated a tendency to espouse the belief that their practices were eclectic in nature. However, after closer examination of quantitative and qualitative data, teachers continue to dedicate considerable time to literacy instruction utilizing traditional direct instruction methodology, similar to their counterparts of the 1960s. These practices include reading aloud to children, writing, and direct teaching of

reading and language arts skills and strategies (Baumann et al., 2000). Phonics,

vocabulary, and other word identification skills continue to be taught through direct

instructional practices. Critical reading and comprehension skills are emphasized.

Teachers rely on whole class and ability grouping organizational practices utilizing a

commercially produced basal program.

As much as researchers would like to relate that teachers' espoused beliefs have

demonstrated considerable change towards an eclectic view concerning literacy

instruction during that last decade, it would appear that the questionnaire respondents and

interview participants in this sample mirror Chall's (1967) original assumptions and

conclusions. Their practices appear to be aligned with policymakers' mandates,

reflecting little of the research-based consensus found in the area of literacy reported

during the last decade.

It is apparent that there continues to be a need for the conduct of research usable

in the world of practice. Improvements in instructional practice which result in increased

student achievement must be nurtured in educational environments where the

incongruities between practitioners' espoused theories and theories-in-use can be realized

and examined.   Only then can the multifaceted relationship between research and

practice mature into one of continuous interaction, reflection, and productive change.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

MIAMI – DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

OFFICE OF EVALUATION & RESEARCH ● 1500 BISCAYNE BOULEVARD, SUITE 225 ● MIAMI, FLORIDA 33132

Roger C. Cuevas
Superintendent of Schools

Robert A. Collins
Executive Director
Office of Evaluation and Research
(305) 995-7529
FAX: 995-7571

Dade County School Board
Ms. Perla Tabares Hantman, Chair
Dr. Michael M. Krop, Vice-Chair
Mr. G. Holmes Braddock
Dr. Robert B. Ingram
Ms. Betsy H. Kaplan
Mrs. Manty Sabatés Morse
Mr. Demetrio Pérez, Jr., M.S.
Dr. Marta Pérez
Dr. Solomon C. Stinson

July 20, 2000

Lauren Gach
10250 S.W. 57 Avenue
Miami, Florida 33156

Dear Ms. Gach:

I am pleased to inform you that the Research Review Committee of the Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) has approved your request to conduct the study, "A Study of the Congruency between Teachers' Perceptions of the Research on Effective Literacy Instruction and Teachers' Classroom Practice." The approval is granted with the following conditions:

1. Participation of a school in the study is at the discretion of the principal. A copy of this approval letter must be presented to the principal.

2. The participation of all subjects is voluntary.

3. The anonymity and confidentiality of all subjects must be assured.

4. The study will involve approximately 933 MDCPS teachers at 18 schools.

5. Disruption of the school's routine by the data collection activities of the study must be kept at a minimum. Data collection activities must not interfere with the district's testing schedule.

6. The MDCPS internal school mail system cannot be used in conducting the study.

It should be emphasized that the approval of the Research Review Committee does not constitute an endorsement of the study. It is simply a permission to request the voluntary cooperation in the study of individuals associated with the MDCPS. It is your responsibility

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to ensure that appropriate procedures are followed in requesting an individual's cooperation, and that all aspects of the study are conducted in a professional manner. With regard to the latter, make certain that all documents and instruments distributed within the MDCPS as a part of the study are carefully edited.

The approval number for your study is 693. This number should be used in all communications to clearly identify the study as approved by the Research Review Committee. The approval expires on June 30, 2001. During the approval period, the study must adhere to the design, procedures and instruments which were submitted to the Research Review Committee. If there are any changes in the study as it relates to the MDCPS, it may be necessary to resubmit your request to the committee. Failure to notify me of such a change may result in the cancellation of the approval.

If you have any questions, please call me at (305) 995-7501. Finally, remember to forward an abstract of the study when it is complete. On behalf of the Research Review Committee, I want to wish you every success with your study.

Sincerely,
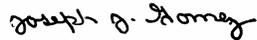
Joseph J. Gomez, Ph.D.
Chairperson
Research Review Committee

JJG:cg

APPROVAL NUMBER: 693	APPROVAL EXPIRES: 6-30-01

Appendix B

COVER LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE

Fall 2000

Dear Fellow Teacher,

      As partial fulfillment of my doctorate, which I am pursuing at Florida International University, I have designed a questionnaire to be administered and analyzed. I invite you to participate in my dissertation research. I am surveying Miami-Dade County School teachers' instructional beliefs. You need only to answer the enclosed questionnaire to the best of your ability. Please be assured that all information is confidential. Sincere thanks and appreciation are extended to you for donating your time and effort to help me successfully complete my research.

      Gratefully,

      Laurie Gach
      Doctoral Candidate
      Florida International University

Appendix C

LITERACY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES QUESTIONNAIRE

Literacy Instructional Practices Questionnaire

1. Which of the following best describes your current position? (Check only one)
   ___Teacher ___Curriculum Coordinator ___Assistant Principal/Principal
   ___Media Specialist ___Other School Professional

2. In your current position, which of the following grade levels do you work with?
   (Check only one)
   ___Pre-Kindergarten ___Kindergarten ___Grade 1 ___Grade 2 ___Grade 3 ___Grade 4
   ___Grade 5 ___Early Childhood School ___Elementary School

3. In your current position, which of the following describes the majority of the population you work
   with? (Check only one)
   ___Advantaged urban ____Mixed urban ____Disadvantaged urban

4. Total years of professional experience (Check only one)
   ___1-2 years ___3-4 years ___5-9 years ___10-20 years ___over 20 years

5. Highest educational degree (Check only one)
   ___Bachelor's ___Master's ___Education Specialist ___Doctorate

6. Gender
   ___Female ___Male

7. Ethnicity (Check only one)
   ___White Non-Hispanic ___Hispanic ___Black ___Asian ___Other

Circle one answer for each of the statements below:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	4	3	0	2	1

	SA	A	U	D	SD
	4	3	0	2	1

	SA	A	U	D	SD
8. Children learn to read in the same natural way that they acquire oral and aural language skills.	4	3	0	2	1
9. Devoting specific time to word recognition in isolation is a desirable practice.	4	3	0	2	1
10. Words and their definitions should be taught in order to build up children's sight vocabulary.	4	3	0	2	1
11. Beginning readers should be taught phonics.	4	3	0	2	1
12. Graded reading schemes using controlled vocabulary should be used in classrooms.	4	3	0	2	1
13. Sight vocabulary learned in isolation does transfer to text reading.	4	3	0	2	1
14. Effective literacy programs should be organized to allow for the specific study of separate skills such as comprehension, word recognition, and phonics.	4	3	0	2	1
15. When coming to a word that is unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess upon the pronunciation and go on.	4	3	0	2	1
16. Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading.	4	3	0	2	1
17. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension.	4	3	0	2	1

(Please turn over on the back to complete. Thank you!)

	SA	A	U	D	S
18. Teachers should regularly test reading skills.	4	3	0	2	1
19. Reading aloud to students should occur daily.	4	3	0	2	1
20. Spelling lists derived from reading vocabulary are essential for successful literacy instruction.	4	3	0	2	1
21. Children's use of invented spelling reinforces bad habits.	4	3	0	2	1
22. Words learned in spelling lists are generally transferred successfully to children's writing.	4	3	0	2	1
23. Specific time each week should be devoted to the explicit teaching of grammar skills.	4	3	0	2	1
24. An effective literacy program combines a graded reading scheme and authentic texts.	4	3	0	2	1
25. Ability grouping should be used in the teaching of literacy.	4	3	0	2	1
26. Cooperative learning should be used in the teaching of literacy.	4	3	0	2	1
27. Reading professional literature has influenced my beliefs about literacy.	4	3	0	2	1
28. Reading professional literature has led to significant changes in my literacy practices.	4	3	0	2	1
29. Being a participant in university courses has influenced my literacy practices.	4	3	0	2	1
30. Supervising and mentoring novice teachers has influenced my literacy practice.	4	3	0	2	1
31. My thinking about the teaching of literacy has been strongly influenced by research.	4	3	0	2	1
32. Hearing teachers talk about research has strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.	4	3	0	2	1
33. District mandates have strongly influenced my literacy teaching practices.	4	3	0	2	1
34. I am a member of a professional literacy association.	4	3	0	2	1
35. I have read a book(s) about literacy teaching or learning in the past year.	4	3	0	2	1
36. I have read a journal or magazine about literacy teaching or learning in the past year.	4	3	0	2	1
37. I have attended a conference or a workshop concerning literacy teaching or learning in the past year.	4	3	0	2	1

Circle one answer for each of the following questions.

38. Which of these statements best represents your beliefs and practices concerning literacy instruction?
   A. I support skills and back-to-basics
   B. I support an eclectic approach that combines both basic skills and whole language
   C. I support whole language beliefs and practices

39. Which of these statements best represents your beliefs concerning research and its application to practice in the classroom environment?
   A. I read and apply research to my classroom practice on a regular basis
   B. I read and apply research to my classroom practice sometimes
   C. I read and apply research to my classroom practice rarely
   D. I do not read or apply research to my classroom practice

Appendix D

OPEN ENDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

1. Describe the reading instruction in your classroom on a typical day.

2. You use a variety of activities in teaching your students to read. Which activities do you think are the most important for your students?

3. What kinds of activities do you feel students should be involved in for the majority of reading instructional time?

4. How has research impacted your choice of literacy instructional practices?

5. To which model of instruction do you adhere – skills based, eclectic, or whole language?

Appendix E

MANOVA RESULTS

MANOVA for Effects of the Independent Variables of SES, Degree, and Experience

on the Dependent Variables (N = 242)

Source	Wilks' Λ	df	F	p	ς^2
Schools' Socio-economic Status	.933	16	.968	.491	.034
Degree (D)	.970	8	.829	.578	.030
Experience (E)	.926	16	1.067	.385	.038
S x E	.867	32	.996	.475	.021
S x D	.959	16	.582	.898	.021
E x D	.907	16	1.362	.156	.048
S x E x D	.899	24	.989	.479	.035

VITA

LAUREN GACH

June 30, 1954	Born, Miami Beach, Florida
1975	B. S., Elementary Education Florida International University Miami, Florida
1976	M. S., Reading and Learning Disabilities Florida State University Tallahassee, Florida
1977-1979	Varying Exceptionalties Teacher Pine Villa Elementary School Goulds, Florida
1979-1986	Elementary Teacher Devon Aire Elementary School Miami, Florida
1986-1996	Intermediate Elementary Teacher Joe Hall Elementary School Miami, Florida
1991	Peace Teacher of the Year Dade County Grace Contrino Abrams Peace Education Foundation Miami, Florida
1996-Present	Reading/Language Arts Teacher Pinecrest Elementary School Miami, Florida
1999	Certification in Educational Leadership Florida International University Miami, Florida