EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS WITH LIBRARIES AND EDUCATIONAL

TECHNOLOGY TO CLOSE THE LITERACY GAP: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

Pamela M. Jones

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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APPROVED BY:

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Abstract

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to discover how educators view the use of school libraries with educational technology's contribution to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments. The theoretical framework that guided this research study was Vygotsky and Leont'ev's Activity theory. The central research question for this study was How do educators describe their professional experiences with school libraries and educational technology? Purposive and Snowball sampling methods were used to select the sites and the 12 participants located in rural, urban, and suburban K12 public school districts that educate K5 learners across Central Virginia. The participants in the study were building-level educators endorsed in Library/Media PreK-12, Reading, English, or Administration and Supervision in the State of Virginia. Participant journals, semi-structured interview questions, and a focus group were the data collection methods used for this research. The phenomenological approach was used to analyze the data and to ensure triangulation, the processes of horizontalization and coding were used to identify common themes and patterns to identify textural and structural descriptions that led to an understanding of how the lived experiences of educators impact their ability to include school libraries with educational technology as instructional resources in learning environments.

Keywords: school library, collaboration, information literacy, educational technology, Human Performance Technology (HPT)

Copyright Page

Dedication

I dedicate this manuscript first and foremost to God, my creator, from whom all my blessings flow! I give thanks to God for my family, friends, and co-workers who have consistently encouraged and reassured me through this journey with their support and prayer to hold on, the best is yet to come.

Eboni Haynes Ph.D., you have always been a consistent and constant presence in my life as one of my biggest cheerleaders. Thank you for pushing me! My world is better with you in it! I love you more than you know.

To my daughter Britney Michele, I want you to know that you are the inspiration for me to aspire to become the best I can be. Your earthly presence blessed my life when we brought you home with us and your presence continues to encourage me to be the best version of myself. I am truly blessed because I could not have made this journey without you. I love you, daughter!

To my grandsons, Donovan, Jahkeim, and Jahmarri, I want you to know that you can do and be anything that your heart desires. Enjoy your childhood and as you each enter adulthood, always know that YOU ARE LOVED and that you are always protected with the Grace and Mercy of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Acknowledgments

As I live to be a "Champion for Christ", I must continue to give God the praise and glory for keeping me safe while allowing me to push forward during the good and bad times that I have encountered during this doctoral journey. I have been truly blessed and I must give a special thank you to all of my family for affording me the time and flexibility to write and conduct the research for this manuscript.

I would like to thank my dissertation committee members, Chair, Dr. Matthew O. Ozolnieks and Dr. Michelle Paino, respectively, for their patience and the invaluable guidance they each have provided. Together, they have worked with me as I have navigated this journey of academic accomplishment, and for their wisdom, I am eternally grateful.

To all those who participated in this research, without you, this research would not have been possible. With love in my heart, I sincerely thank each of you for taking the time to share your experiences and for your dedication to ensuring today's learners are prepared for the future.

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List of Abbreviations

American Association of School Libraries (AASL)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Human Performance Technology (HPT)

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Local Educational Agency (LEA)

Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Educators have limited knowledge of the contributions that school libraries and the integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills. In learning environments today, educators strive to provide instruction to learners that are transferable into the real world, skills that extend well beyond graduating high school (Burns et al., 2021). This phenomenological transcendental study discovered how the lived experiences of educators or the lack thereof with school libraries and educational technology impacted their attitudes and beliefs regarding how these resources contributed to closing the literacy gap that exists in K12 learners (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020).

This research examined the lived experiences of K12 educators who were read to during their childhood, who visited libraries during their childhood, and how their use of technology, or the lack thereof had any impact on whether these resources were integrated into K12 learning environments (Chu et al., 2011; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Gonzalez, 2015). This research provided a deeper understanding of whether educators perceived libraries with the integration of educational technology as valuable resources that contributed to the development of literacy skills in K12 learners. Additionally, Chapter One provided the historical, social, and theoretical background, and the significance of this study, as well as identified the research questions to address the attitudes and beliefs of educators with libraries and the integration of educational technology contributions to learners in K12 learning environments.

Background

Education is designed to prepare students to become literate adults who can work and live as productive members of a global society. As such, it has become increasingly important that

educators in K12 learning environments begin to create collaborative learning environments (Lomos, et al., 2011) that implore the use of all available tools and resources to ensure learners are motivated and actively engaged in the learning process. As schools in societies today are preparing learners to compete globally, it is becoming necessary to ensure that every opportunity and resource is utilized to maximize learning outcomes for learners (Cox, 2018; Fagan et al., 2021). As such, educators must let go of their thoughts and beliefs about school libraries from the past and begin to embrace school libraries and the integration of educational technology as collaborative literacy resources in K12 learning environments that contribute to closing the literacy gap of learners.

Historical Context

The lived experiences related to a particular topic and how groups and individuals view the skills and usefulness of school libraries continue to come into question. As the field of education evolves to provide learners with literacy skills and the ability to globally compete (Cox, 2018; Fagan et al., 2021; Kahl, 2018), consistently the research highlighted the contributions of school libraries and educational technology impact on the development of literacy skills in learners (Lomos, et al., 2011). When fully recognized by educators, the contributions of libraries and educational technology through collaboration and communication can create a shift in the attitudes and beliefs of educators in K12 learning environments. Collaboration and communication are skills for educators that are becoming common, and the school library environment is at the forefront of repositioning the role of school libraries to demonstrate how collaboration with school libraries contribute to the academic successes of learners in K12 learning environments (Cox, 2018; Fagan, et al., 2021; Kizziar, 2021).

Mcclurg et al. (2019); Black's (2018) research supported that when educators and school

libraries connect collaboratively, the inclusion of libraries and educational technology creates collaborative environments that aid in the development of literacy instruction that contributes to the academic success of students. Yet still today, the role of school libraries continues to be ambiguous to educators (Copeland & Jacobs, 2017;2012; Fagan et al., 2012), in part due to the stereotypes associated with school libraries from the past, educators continue to be vague about how and what school libraries contribute to learning environments (Hammons, 2020). Historically, libraries have been seen as the place where books and periodicals can be obtained; therefore; school libraries have not been viewed as an essential component in learning environments to promote and provide literacy instruction to learners (Crary, 2019; Fagan et al., 2021; Hover & Wise, 2022;2020).

Therefore, the attitudes and beliefs educators exhibit about how school libraries contribute to learning environments continue to create the ambiguity that exists because educators have not fully recognized the contributions of school libraries and educational technology as valuable resources that contribute to the academic success of K12 learners. As such, educators are unaware of the contributions that collectively and collaboratively these resources impact the literacy skills of learners to close the literacy gaps that exist in learners today (Lance et al., 2018; Naraian, 2019). While the role of school libraries from the past continues to amplify the stereotypes that have existed as we move into the 21st century, educators are challenged to recognize how their attitudes and beliefs that were developed during the early stages of their lives have an impact on how these resources are viewed as leaders when they are integrated into literacy instruction in K12 learning environments today (Bleidt, 2011; Burns et al., 2021; Cox, 2018; Lance et al., 2018).

Social Context

Today, the role school libraries and educational technology have in learning environments is changing rapidly to keep pace with the rigors of education and emerging technologies. Cox's (2018) research identified that there is a need to create and establish a vision for school libraries to ensure students are prepared to become global members of society. The author wrote that establishing "partnerships across learning environments provides a holistic approach to student success" (p. 26). Therefore, educators must begin to embrace, adopt, and adapt to an ever-changing environment that recognizes school libraries and educational technology as resources that can support improving literacy in K12 learning environments. As such, educators must reflect on their attitudes and beliefs about school libraries and educational technology as literacy leaders in K12 environments and embrace how collaboration between themselves and school libraries and educational technology can positively impact the academic successes of learners when providing instruction (AASL, 2018; Cox, 2018; Kizziar, 2021).

School libraries and educational technology have begun to reposition themselves as collaborative partners and literacy leaders in K12 learning environments. School libraries have adopted the literacy standards developed by the American Association of School Libraries, (AASL, 2018). These standards were developed to complement state standards and serve as a guide for school libraries to teach information literacy and technology skills to learners which are critical to ensuring learners can function in the knowledge-based and technology societies that exist today. For the benefit of learners today, it is significant now more than ever that the stereotypes that existed that shaped the attitudes and beliefs of educators begin to shift to developing a more inclusive and collaborative relationship with school libraries (Chu et al., 2011; Kuhlthau, 2004; Merga, 2023; Scott & O'Sullivan, 2005).

Developing inclusive and collaborative relationships to teach literacy with school libraries and the integration of technology skills aids in ensuring learners are academically successful and contributes to closing the literacy gap in K12 learning environments. And with the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (2015), research continues to demonstrate that school libraries can be a valuable resource for improving literacy scores (Lomos, et al., 2011). Studies have indicated that changes in the attitudes and beliefs of educators about school libraries and educational technology as literacy resources in education are shifting and new meaning is being given to how school libraries and the integration of educational technology are being positioned in K12 learning environments to aid in the development of literacy skills in learners.

Accordingly, the Ithaka Faculty Survey identified an increase in the engagement of faculty with school libraries between 2009 and 2012 and identified the effectiveness of creating collaborative partnerships in teaching and learning environments (Schonfeld & Houseright, 2009; Schonfeld et al., 2012) as a key component to supporting literacy in learning environments. Furthermore, Chu et al. (2011); Reed and Oslund's (2018) research suggested that educators look closer at school libraries as knowledgeable partners and literacy leaders in their contributions to the development of literacy skills in K12 learning environments that add value and a complement literacy when providing instruction to learners. The author's research acknowledged that school libraries complement the learning environment as they foster an educational climate of collaboration to counteract deficits in the reading abilities of learners.

Because humans learn from their experiences and the shared experiences of others that are intentional and intuitive (Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978), this research study explored the meaning in the thought, memory, imagination, emotion, and desire of the experiences of

educators about how and when educators were introduced to school libraries and technology in their lives (Naraian, 2019; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). In finding the meaning, this research discovered how the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role of school libraries and the integration of educational technology into K12 learning environments have evolved or remained the same over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019). As such, this research sought to understand whether the lived experiences of educators were impacted because of the way libraries have historically been perceived and discovered how their preconceived notions were related to when they were introduced to libraries and technology.

In this study, it is important to note the relationship between one's reality and one's psychological, emotional, and human needs in specific situations. Understanding how the realities of educators connect with their life experiences provided clarity in understanding the relationship between their realities to how their life experiences are integrated into their daily professional lives and routines (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leont'ev, 1978; Naraian, 2019; Piaget, 1936; Vygotsky, 1978). This study provided an opportunity to discover whether the lived experiences of educators had any relationship to how school libraries and educational technology are considered valuable literacy resources that contribute to closing the literacy gap that exists in K12 learning environments (Cope & Sanabria, 2014) for 21st-century learners.

Theoretical Context

As educators around the world attempt to determine the best way to ensure learners are prepared to live and work in the 21st century, there is a growing concern in the United States about the low level of competency learners exhibit in math and science. A growing concern to meet the demands for elevated levels of literacy necessary to compete in the technological workplace of future (Clote, 2017; Kuhlthau, 2021). In the technology-advanced society learners

live in today, school libraries have been expected to provide and offer support by providing

literacy instruction in K12 learning environments (Eutsler, 2022; Merga, 2020; Kuhlthau, 2021).

Therefore, school libraries and educational technology, along with collaboration between

educators can promote literacy and have a positive effect on closing the literacy gap that in K12

learners (Kizziar, 2021; Lance & Kachel, 2018).

Problem Statement

The problem is that educators have limited knowledge of how school libraries and the

integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills

that extend beyond high school (Burns et al. 2021; Clote, 2017). This research examined the

lived experiences of educators who were read to and how their use of technology as a child had

any impact on whether libraries and technology are integrated into K12 learning environments.

In examining the lived experiences of an educator's use of libraries and educational technology,

this research provided insight into whether the integration of libraries and educational technology

were viewed by educators as valuable resource tools for K12 learners. Moustakas's (1994);

Vygotsky's (1978) research indicates that prior knowledge and background experience are

natural phonemes in the study of the science of humans. The researchers identified that the

ability to learn is dependent on the learner's behavioral and cognitive capacity to process

information, their independent interactions, and their experiences (Bandura, 1977; Bond &

Blevins, 2020). Therefore, the development of literacy skills in learners is dependent on their

motivation, ability, behavior, and attitudes.

There is a limited amount of literature on the implications of the integration of school

libraries and educational technology, along with the impact these have on the development of

literacy skills of K12 learners. How educators view and perceive the contribution of libraries and

educational technology when integrated into teaching and learning is what this study explored and discovered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018). As such, this research study highlighted and demonstrated the possibilities and benefits of improving literacy skills in K12 learning environments when collaboration exists between libraries, inclusive of educational technology, and educators.

This study investigated how the creation of these collaborative partnerships can bridge and close the literacy gaps that exist for learners when equitable learning opportunities are provided for all (Carr, 1997; Dirksen, 2016; Gerson & Gerson, 2008). It has been established that the practice of collaboration among educators and school libraries can lead to improved learning outcomes and increased learner engagement to aid in the development of academic success and improved literacy skills of K12 learners (Copeland & Jacobs, 2017; Lance et al., 2010; O'Neal, 2004; Subur et al., 2022). However, the problem is that educators have limited knowledge of how school libraries and the integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills that extend beyond high school (Burns et al., 2021; Clote, 2017).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). As the use of technology has contributed to broadening the scope of how, when, and where learners learn (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018), school libraries have played a critical role in supporting the development of literacy skills in learners.

Significance of the Study

Collaboration between educators and school libraries and the integration of educational technology is most important to combat the literacy deficit in K12 learning environments that exist today. The significance of this study embraced the practical, theoretical, and empirical perspectives, as the possibilities and benefits of educators and school libraries that collaborate and communicate can bridge literacy gaps that exist for learners to ensure equitable learning opportunities are provided for all. Collaboration between educators and school libraries that incorporate the American Association of School Librarians [AASL] (2018) Shared Foundations and Four Key Commitments (See Table I) can create equitable learning opportunities for all learners.

These shared foundations were designed to guide K12 school libraries with measures to promote literacy and are an inclusive step to overcoming the literacy deficit that exists in society today. Particularly after schools and children experienced the impact of COVID-19 during school years 2020-2022. This study offered a deeper understanding of the experiences of K12 Library/Media specialists, reading specialists, and administrators' abilities to form collaborative partnerships in learning environments. Educators were able to ascertain the essence and meaning of how their childhood experiences influenced their attitudes and beliefs about the contributions school libraries and educational technology are as essential resources in collaborative learning environments that promote literacy skills in learners (Moustakas, 1994).

Table 1. AASL Shared Foundations and Key Commitments

Shared Foundation		Key Commitment
I.	Inquire	Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.
II.	Include	Demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.
III.	Collaborate	Work effectively with others to broaden perspectives and work toward common goals.
IV.	Curate	Make meaning for oneself and others by collecting, organizing, and sharing resources of personal relevance.
V.	Explore	Discover and innovate in a growth mindset developed through experience and reflection.
VI.	Engage	Demonstrate safe, legal, and ethical creating and sharing of knowledge products independently while engaging in a community of practice and an interconnected world.

Theoretical Implications

Vygotsky and Leont'ev (1978) activity theory informed the theoretical implications of this study as its focus was on how educators who lead literacy developed their skills that were influenced by their interactions with school libraries and educational technology during their youth. The theoretical implications of this study are also documented through the experiences and reflections of educators in Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning a desire of the participants to be more inclusive of school libraries and educational technology as literacy partners in K12 learning environments. Additionally, the theoretical implication of this study enabled educators, who are literacy leaders, the ability to recognize the importance of the need for coursework and training that might be nonexistent in teacher preparation coursework. Training and coursework during teacher preparation intentionally focused on providing strategies to teach literacy skills, inclusive of school libraries to close the literacy that exists in learners today (Robertson et al., 2020).

Empirical Implications

As educators around the world attempt to determine the best way to ensure learners are prepared to live and work in the 21st century, there is a growing concern in the United States about the low level of competency learners exhibit in math and science. A growing concern about meeting the demands for elevated levels of literacy necessary to compete in the technological workplace of the future (Clote, 2017; Kuhlthau, 2021). And in the technology-advanced society learners live in today, school libraries have been expected to provide and offer support by providing literacy instruction in K12 learning environments (Merga, 2020; Kuhlthau, 2021). Therefore, school libraries and educational technology, along with collaboration between educators can promote literacy and have a positive effect on closing the literacy gap that exists in the literacy skills of K12 learners (Lance & Kachel, 2018). ▣

The empirical significance of this study denoted how the early experiences and exposure of educators who lead the development of literacy initiatives and programs in schools have influenced the value they place on the contributions school libraries and educational technology make to increasing literacy skills in students. This study provided insight into how those early experiences of educators have influenced how school libraries and educational technology are incorporated into their learning environments as contributing resources that assist in developing literacy skills in students. Additionally, this study will provide insight into how teacher preparation coursework does not adequately train or prepare teachers to teach literacy that is collaborative and inclusive of school libraries and educational technology

Practical Implications

The practical significance of this study related to causation to explain the phenomenon as it relates to how educators view the role school libraries and educational technology play in

literacy. This study offered those who provide literacy instruction a wide view of the reasons the attitudes and beliefs are formed during an educator's early experiences with school libraries and educational technology and how those prior experiences are brought forward into their professional experiences as educators in their learning environments.

Research Questions

Creswell and Poth (2018) identify that the central and sub-research questions in qualitative research narrow the research study's purpose to explore a phenomenon. The purpose of this phenomenological transcendental study was to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and the use of educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). A change in the attitudes and beliefs of educators concerning the contributions of school libraries in K12 learning environments is increasingly becoming necessary to ensure that every opportunity and resource is utilized to maximize outcomes that contribute to literate students; students who become literate adults to work and live as productive members of this global society.

As such, in striving to maximize learner outcomes, the use of educational technology has taken a role as a literacy resource tool in learning environments to support literacy instruction in K12 learning. This study explores educators' attitudes and beliefs toward the contribution of libraries and educational technology to learning in K12 environments and is predicated on when and how they were introduced to these resource tools. The results of this study offered insight into how libraries and the integration of technology in the twenty-first century can impact the cognitive and literacy skills of learners today. The research questions guiding this study are:

Central Research Question

How do educators describe their professional experiences with school libraries and educational technology?

Sub-Question One

How do the early childhood experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology impact the way literacy instruction is provided to learners in their professional lives?

Sub-Question Two

How do educators as instructional leaders describe their experiences using school libraries and educational technology as resources when developing literacy instruction in K12 learning environments?

Sub-Question Three

How do educators describe their critical self-reflection experiences when making informed decisions to create and provide literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology?

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Definitions

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Terms pertinent to this study are listed and defined.

1. *Activity Theory* – framework for studying different kinds of human practices as development processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time (Albusaidi, 2019; Kuutti, 1996).

2. *Human Performance Technology (HPT)* – Systems thinking applied to human resource activities (O'Driscoll, 2015).

3. *Literacy* – Ability to access, evaluate, and integrate information from a wide range of textual sources (Reardon et al., 2012).

4. *Information Literacy* – A set of skills, abilities, or behaviors learned when information seeking (Sample, 2020).

5. *Social Learning* – A theoretical approach to socialization that observes the occurrence of similarity in behavior of a model and another person (Bandura, 1977)

Summary

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). Chapter One identified the historical, theoretical, and social context of the relationship of school libraries and educational technology to society and the problem that educators have limited knowledge of how school libraries and the integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills that extend beyond high school (Burns et al., 2021; Clote, 2017). This chapter provided the theoretical framework to document and ascertain the emotional and intellectual perceptions of educators concerning whether libraries and educational technology when used collaboratively contribute to the development of literacy skills in K12 learners (Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter One provided the foundational evidence that guided this research to demonstrate how a change in the perceptions educators possess of school libraries and the integration of educational technology is necessary to provide K12 students with academic advantages when it comes to literacy. Chapter One outlined and identified the need for K12 learning environments to rethink the role of school libraries to enable them with opportunities for collaboration to ensure

they are included as expert leaders in all areas of literacy and technology, Lastly, Chapter One explained how an educators' psychological and emotional interactions through lived experiences, interaction, collaboration, and authentic work lead to the success of learners, as well as provided insight for future research opportunities in education.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology was to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). The use of a phenomenological approach was used in this study to find commonalities in the lived experiences of educators (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Giletta et al., 2021; van Manen, 2016) with school libraries and educational technology as children and in their professional lives. Chapter Two will provided a systematic review of the current literature to explore whether the literacy performance of learners in K12 learning environments is impacted by the attitudes and beliefs educators possess when school libraries and educational technology are integrated into K12 learning environments as resources during instruction.

The information furnished in the literature review focused on the theoretical frameworks of Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) activity theory and Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning as each related to the lived experiences of the educators who participated in this study. This study explored the lived experiences of educators about the value they place on the use of school libraries and educational technology as literacy partners and whether their lived experiences had any impact on their attitudes and beliefs regarding the value of these resources

in K12 learning environments (Cuthbertson et al., 2020; Moustakas, 1994; Zeidnert et al., 2016). Lastly, the concept of Human Performance Technology (HPT) is discussed and how integrating the concepts of HPT collaboratively with school libraries and educational technology can be valuable instructional resource tools (Kang & Molenda, 2018). Valuable instructional resource tools to ensure that learners in K12 learning environments today are fluent and are information literate to achieve academic success (Black, 2018; Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Kang & Molenda, 2018; Subur et al., 2022).

Theoretical Framework

According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), the theoretical framework is the most important facet of the research process. As such, the theoretical framework used in qualitative research can offer valuable insight to explain a phenomenon (Gall, 2007; Gall et al., 2007; Hashim & Jones, 2007). For this research study, Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) research on Activity theory will be the theoretical framework to guide the constructs of this research study. Activity theory is defined as a "framework for studying various kinds of human practices as development processes, with both individual and social levels interlinked at the same time" (Albusaidi, 2019; Kuutti, 1996, p. 25).

Although not commonly the foundation of theories found in most of the literature reviewed, the basic principles of Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) Activity theory are centered around the activities of those who engage in dialogue to understand different perspectives and provide a rich context to understand how people collaborate (Chu et al., 2011; Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014; Hashim & Jones, 2007). Activity theory is a theoretical framework that was first introduced by Vygotsky and further developed by Leont'ev in 1978. Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) theory is based on the premise that human activity is mediated by tools and

technologies, which are used to achieve certain goals or objectives. According to Activity theory,

individuals are not passive recipients of information or knowledge but are active participants in

the creation of knowledge and meaning (Clote, 2017). The theory posits that human activity is

influenced by the social, cultural, and historical context in which it occurs and that an

individual's actions are shaped by the tools and technologies they use (Carr, 1997; Hasan &

Kazlauskas, 2014; Hashim & Jones, 2007).

 Research conducted on Activity theory by Hashim and Jones (2007) suggests that human

activity can be analyzed in diverse ways. Human activity, according to the authors, can be

analyzed individually, in a group, and at the organizational level. At the individual level, Hashim

and Jones (2007) assert that activity theory emphasizes the importance of understanding how

individuals use tools and technologies to achieve their goals. At the group level, Hashim and

Jones (2007) theorize that Activity theory emphasizes the importance of understanding how

social and cultural norms shape individuals' behavior and how group dynamics influence

activity. And on the organizational level, Hashim and Jones (2007) explain that activity theory

emphasizes the importance of understanding how work processes are structured and how tools

and technologies are used to support and facilitate activities. Overall, Activity theory provides a

comprehensive framework for understanding human activity by analyzing human activity at

various levels, activity theory provides insights into how an activity is structured, how tools and

technologies are used, and how activity can be improved and optimized (Hasan & Kazlauskas,

2014; Hashim and Jones, 2007; Vygotsky and Leont'ev's, 1978).

 This research study seeks to understand the lived experiences of educators with school

libraries and educational technology utilizing the principles of the theoretical framework of

Activity theory (Vygotsky and Leont'ev's, 1978). The use of this theory assisted in identifying

the existence of any commonalities in the lived experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As such, the uninhibitedness of this principle afforded this researcher the ability to make in-depth observations of the attitudes and beliefs of the educators to ascertain the deeper meaning of their shared experiences. The use of this theory enabled the ability for participants to understand how their environment and exposure to school libraries and educational technology was significant in the development their attitudes and beliefs about whether school libraries and educational technology are valuable and viable resource tools that can be utilized to aid in the development of literacy skills in K12 learners (Albusaidi, 2019; Bond & Blevins, 2020; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Engeström, 2000) in learning environments.

Additionally, this research determined that there is a relationship that exists to Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning or social constructivism noted in the concept of Activity theory (Vygotsky & Lenot'ev, 1978). Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning is a theoretical approach to socialization that observes occurrences of similarity in the behaviors of a model and another person and considers how both environmental and cognitive factors interact to influence human learning and behavior. The existence of the relationship between Bandura's (1977) social learning theory and Vygotsky's and Lenot'ev's (1978) activity theory provided this researcher the ability to gain a deeper insight into the participants' attitudes and beliefs about libraries and educational technology.

Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning is to understand the psychological, emotional, and human needs, and interactions of individuals to acquire knowledge is determined by their experiences, these individuals believe that what they see and experience in the world is real. However, these individuals respectively known as social constructivists also believe that

although the world is real there are multiple realities where knowledge acquired needs to be interpreted to understand the meaning (Dirksen, 2016; Gutek, 2005; Piaget, 1936). Social constructivists encourage the creation of knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and authentic work and as such, the ability to learn is dependent on the behavioral and cognitive capacity of the learner to independently process information, interactions, and experiences experienced (Bandura, 1977; Bond & Blevins, 2020; Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978).

As Reed and Oslund's (2018) research points out, there is ambiguity regarding the role of school libraries and educational technology among educators when providing literacy instruction. Because of the ambiguity that educators seem to possess about the value school libraries and educational technology contribute to literacy, the theories guiding this study are strongly connected to my research topic. As the attitudes and beliefs surrounding this phenomenon stem from the social and psychological activity that influences one's internal and external realities, educators whose attitudes and beliefs of the contribution of school libraries with educational technology in K12 learning environments contribute to literacy should be revisited (Elander & Cronje, 2016; Fagan et al., 2021; Kuhlthau, 2021). In this study, the focus is on literacy as an internal activity and developing the external means and efforts to engage collaboration between educators and school libraries that demonstrate the contributions to literacy that benefit students. Because the attitudes and beliefs of educators are the psychological activity that is derived from their lived experiences, how educators view the roles, responsibilities, and contributions of others is connected to human motivation, because "human beings live in an objective reality which determines and shapes the nature of subjective phenomenal" (Leont'ev 1978, p. 191).

This research study will demonstrate the relationship between the theoretical frameworks of Bandura's (1977) theory of Social Learning and Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) Activity theory. Bandura's (1977) theory of Social Learning theorizes that people learn from each other through observation and modeling. The relationship between the theory of Social Learning and its connection with Activity theory will provide this researcher with the opportunity to determine how the activities and interactions of educators with school libraries and educational technology contribute to their current attitudes and beliefs regarding the value these resources contribute to ensuring learners become literate adults and are college and career ready in the 21st century (Kuhlthau, 2021; Kuutti, 1996).

The combination of these theories will generate themes to understand if the lived experiences of educators have any impact on the phenomenon of the attitudes, beliefs, and views of educators regarding libraries and educational technology as viable instructional resource tools (Tinto, 1975; 1993; Piaget, 1936). The theories identified will guide multiple aspects of this study and are evident in the research questions developed. Additionally, evidence to support educators' views and attitudes will be found in the analysis of the data used to verify and validate the results to show alignment with the theoretical frameworks outlined.

Collectively each of these theories emphasizes human behavior developed from experiences. This research study will aid in identifying how the cognitive, behavioral, and environmental interactions of individuals, along with what is learned from others, social learning, impact if and how learners are afforded opportunities to participate in activities that involve interacting with school libraries and educational technology. As educators who participate in this study begin recalling their past and present experiences around when and how they were introduced to libraries and educational technology will add meaning to understanding

whether the resources are intentionally integrated into learning environments to support literacy (Bandura 1977; Dirksen, 2015; Tinto, 1975). As indicated by research, a learner's academic and social integration is very much dependent on the learning in the environment and is a strong indicator of how a learner will perform (Subur et al., 2022; Tinto, 1977; Zeidner et al., 2016).

Related Literature

The problem is that educators have limited knowledge of how school libraries with the integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills that extend beyond high school (Burns et al., 2021; Clote, 2017). This literature review seeks to identify the impact related to the phenomenon of how the attitudes and beliefs of educators from past experiences with libraries and educational technology contribute to their views of the value libraries as a resource contributes to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments. As such, this literature review will identify that when the attitudes and beliefs of educators from past experiences are developed, it is challenging to recognize the role of school libraries as collaborative partners.

In addition, Chapter Two will reveal that when the attitudes and beliefs of educators from past experiences are developed, there are additional challenges for school librarians to be embraced and accepted as instructional leaders that contribute to student learning and their successes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lewis, 2021; Wade et al. 2020). Lastly, Chapter Two will explore how the concept of integrating Human Performance Technology (HPT) in combination with school libraries and educational technology can be seen as valuable tools and resources that contribute to increased literacy of K12 learners when introduced into the learning environment (Carr, 1997; Clote, 2017; Cox, 2018).

New Educational Paradigm

Reardon et al. (2012) research identifies that literacy involves knowledge of complex skills that involve word-reading skills and knowledge of literacy competencies. Because literacy is an essential element to the development of a child that provides numerous opportunities for future growth, the importance of ensuring that learners are college and career-ready continues to challenge educators and researchers (Black, 2018; Conley, 2007; Hammons, 2020; Martin, et al., 2012; Naraian, 2019). Educators and researchers are challenged to create and develop innovative ways to engage learners to read for fun, on their own time, and at home, which will demonstrate improvement in reading scores, to increase the development of literacy skills, while closing the literacy gap of literacy skills among learners as they move beyond high school.

There is a growing demand for educational institutions to develop literacy skills of learners that focus on an individual's quickness to adapt and create in the technological environment today and in the future (Brown & Keep, 2018; Mardis et al., 2001; O'Sullivan & Dallas, 2010; Patek & Anitha, 2022). Accordingly, PBS and Grunwald (2011) research shows that 62% of K12 educators use some form of technology when providing classroom instruction daily. Yet, the use of technology in classroom instruction by educators is used to access learning resources rather than using technology as a tool to increase student engagement which encourages creativity in the learning process as a resource for teaching and learning (Bai, 2019; Brown & Keep, 2018; Frantzen, 2014; Gonzalez, 2015). The way educational technology is integrated into learning environments is the differentiator in this new educational paradigm.

This differentiator in this new educational paradigm is dependent on the learner's ability to acquire new skills that arm learners with the ability to connect and build knowledge on a global scale. A global scale that prepares learners to work and live in the 21st century (Hover &

Wise, 2022;2020; Kuhlthau, 2010; 2021) while providing learners with skillful ability and competencies to maneuver the world as it changes. As such, school libraries have become a valuable partner in ensuring that learners are provided with engaging resources that encourage and promote literacy in various forms. School libraries are dynamic learning centers in this new educational paradigm for 21st-century learners (Kuhlthau, 2021).

Accordingly, Bond & Blevins (2020); Ping et al. (2018); Tondeur et al. (2019) research articulates that to meet the demands of this shift in learning environments today when integrating the use of educational technology, it is important that teacher education programs begin to prepare tomorrow's teachers. Chu et al., (2011); Das (2019); Ekanayake & Wishart (2015) research outlines that teacher education programs benefited significantly when Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is integrated with educational technology in learning environments. The combination of ICT with libraries and educational technology ensures teachers are prepared to ensure learners can compete in the 21st century.

In contrast, Ping et al. (2018) research points out that in teacher education programs, little or limited emphasis is placed on how innovative educators are with the integration of libraries and educational technology as literacy resources in their learning environments to encourage creativity in the learning process when developing equitable strategies for learning during instruction. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) found that 60% of children who were read to frequently were more likely to count to 20. Accordingly, the NCES identifies that children who were read to frequently were more likely to print their names. As such, this research demonstrated the importance of school libraries and educational technology to educators as a viable method that can be used to promote literacy in learners that contributes to their academic successes.

Experiences of Educators with School Libraries

The problem is that educators have limited knowledge of how school libraries with the integration of educational technology contribute to the development of a learner's literacy skills that extend beyond high school (Burns et al., 2021; Clote, 2017). According to Hartzell's (2002) research, the limited knowledge of educators of the role school libraries contribute in the academic achievement of learners can be attributed to the following four causes. Hartzell (2002) suggests that the first cause can be attributed to how educators interacted with libraries in the initial stages of their childhood. The author explains the second cause of the limited knowledge of educators of the value of school libraries is predicated on when educators were introduced to school libraries during their training to become professional educators (Hand, 2017; Hartzell, 2002). A third factor, according to Hartzell, that contributes to the limited knowledge educators possess for the role school libraries contribute in the academic achievement of learners is their attitudes and beliefs of the role of school libraries. The fourth factor identified by Hartzell's research as a contributing factor to the limited knowledge educators possess regarding the role school libraries contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners is due to the lack of literature in the field of education that focuses on how school libraries contribute to the academic successes of learners in the field of education (Hartzell, 2002).

In the development of this research, I recalled my experiences with libraries and educational technology as I matriculated through the K12 learning environment in preparation to leave school and make the transition to higher education or work. In recalling my experiences, I realized that libraries were not embedded into the curriculum that was taught. As a learner, my visits to the library were not promoted or encouraged by educators to develop information literacy skills. Even as recent as the writing of this manuscript, in my current role as a school

librarian where I provide library services to both a middle and high school learners, I note a lack of enthusiasm exhibited by educators is evident when the subject of the usefulness and value of the school library is a topic of conversation. The lack of enthusiasm educators exhibit is centered around their attitudes, beliefs, and lack of knowledge they possess regarding the role of school libraries and the value library resources contribute to literacy skills and the academic success of learners.

School libraries play an essential role in promoting literacy and reading skills among K12 learners. Research studies have shown that learners who have access to well-equipped school libraries and experienced librarians have better reading skills and higher academic achievement. According to a study by the American Library Association (ALA, 2020), schools with better-funded libraries and certified librarians have learners who perform significantly better on standardized reading tests. School libraries also provide students with access to a wide range of print and digital resources, which further promote literacy development and learning.

Furthermore, school librarians play a critical role in supporting literacy instruction and developing students' reading skills. Librarians provide support to teachers by collaborating on literacy-related activities, designing reading programs, and providing students with opportunities to participate in book clubs and other reading-related activities. The collaboration between school librarians and teachers has a significant impact on student achievement. A study by Lance and Loertscher (2016) found that schools with strong librarian-teacher collaborations yield students with higher reading scores than those without such collaborations.

In addition to promoting reading and literacy skills, school libraries also contribute to the development of information literacy skills, which are essential for academic success. School librarians teach students how to find and evaluate information, how to use technology for

research purposes, and how to cite sources properly. The development of these skills is critical for students to become independent learners and to succeed in their future academic pursuits (Kuhlthau, et al., 2015).

How school libraries were used by educators in the past have contributed to the lack of knowledge that educators possess when it comes to integrating school libraries into instruction to align with the mission and needs of K12 learning environments and the community. School libraries of the past were not viewed as resources that enhance the information literacy skills of learners but served as a place for learners to gather information to take back to the learning environment, instead of a place where learners are taught to locate and use information that is applicable to the world as it is today or was then. As such, McKeeer et al. (2017) research of secondary students 11-18 years old identifies that the development of literacy skills in learners is contingent on the attitudes and beliefs that educators possess when it comes to school libraries as a necessary tool in the development of information literacy skills in learners today (Shannon et al., 2019).

In the 21st century providing a quality education will require learning environments that motivate learners to enrich basic literacy skills. To accomplish this, school libraries have become imperative in knowledge societies today to inspire learners to think globally and become innovators. Learning environments that utilized the expertise of school libraries with educational technology that is embedded into the curriculum that indicates educational institutions and educators rethink the use of these resources as transformational tools. As transformational tools learners are encouraged to be creative and take control of their learning when these resources are integrated into learning environments that contribute to an increase in literacy skills that can impact many aspects of a learners' life that ensure a quality education is provided and obtained.

As school libraries begin to reposition themselves to demonstrate how they contribute to overall learner successes, there is still the question of whether the attitudes and beliefs of their role and value has changed (Cox, 2018; Mcclurg et al., 2019; Reed & Oslund, 2018). Therefore, there is a need for K12 learning environments to create a balance and provide opportunities for collaboration with school libraries to provide leadership in the areas of digital literacy, research, etc. Areas where school libraries are the experts and can assist with ensuring the curriculum aligns with the priorities of the institution. Although there is an emphasis on repositioning libraries in higher education, liber education, libraries in K12 learning environments can reposition themselves in K12 education learning environments as well. Research shows that now, more than ever, it is equally important for school libraries to take a more active and collaborative role in leadership to demonstrate their value in the efforts that contribute to the learning outcomes of students (Blummer & Kenton, 2018).

School Librarians as Collaborative and Instructional Leaders

In recent years there has been a growing demand for educational institutions to develop the literacy skills of K12 learners that focus on an individual's quickness to adapt and create in the technological environment that exists today and, in the future, (Brown & Keep, 2018; Merga, 2020; Ping et al., 2018). As such, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on educator and librarian collaboration and there are several studies demonstrating the positive effects on learning and instruction (Lewis, 2021; McKeever et al., 2017; PBS & Grumwald, 2011; Tondeur et al., 2019). Positive effects on learning and instruction that demonstrate how the skills and usefulness of K12 school libraries are perceived by their colleagues and other educators in learning environments are vital to how students view these as viable and valuable resources in teaching and learning for gathering information to lead to an increase in the

development of literacy skills. The skills communication and technology skills that school libraries possess have become common in the stride to repositioning school libraries as resources that contribute to organizational and student successes (Black, 2018; Fagan et al., 2021; Hartzell, 2002).

And during the COVID-19 pandemic, school libraries rose to the challenge and became leaders in supporting learners in a new virtual learning environment. School libraries were tasked with developing innovative ways to support instruction with the integration of educational technology to enhance a learner's performance. As innovation is one of the core values of the AASL, school librarians are often the leaders in adopting and introducing innovative technology to educators that enhances instruction and creates valuable learning opportunities for learners to be creative in producing viable artifacts to demonstrate their learning (AASL, 2020; Lester, 2023).

As a school librarian, it has and continues to be my practice to ensure that learning opportunities for learners are learner centered. To provide learner centered activities that align with the goals and mission of the school district, while incorporating the core values of the AASL (2020). As a collaborative partner in school buildings, whose objectives and goals are to provide learning opportunities for all learners, it is of the utmost importance that communication and collaborative work to build and promote literacy within the school learning community. Establishing a collaborative relationship with educators begins with conversations with building leaders and teachers to ensure that all are working as partners to ensure learners are successful when the focus is on literacy.

In as much as educators do not recognize the value that school libraries contribute to the development of the literacy skills of learners, Lester's (2023) research explains the need for

school librarians to advocate for themselves. School librarians advocate by demonstrating how their training and expertise in developing literacy skills not only for learners but for the entire school community is essential to the success of the entire school community. School librarians build school libraries that offer inclusive resources and provide resources that serve the school community holistically, in addition to the community where the school is located.

While ensuring inclusivity, is the foundation of the school librarian's role in contributing to the literate successes of K12 learners, school librarians must motivate, engage, and instruct learners in reading, while ensuring learners understand how to access reading comprehension strategies that support and contribute to the instruction being provided in the classroom learning environments. As Lester (2023) research identifies with the AASL's (2020a) position statement regarding the *"School Librarian's Role in Reading,"* the author discusses how the role of the school librarians positioned as literacy and instructional leaders in K12 learning environments align with the AASL Standards' Shared Foundations. Foundations that focus on learners being provided with opportunities that lead to their learning through inquiry, collaboration, curate, explore, and engage in learning activities that promote and encourage literacy. Bond and Blevins (2020); Cope and Sanabria (2014); Crary (2019); Geringer (2003) research conducted acknowledge that with the training that professional librarians acquire through education, it is equally important that the educational profession provide new teachers with the knowledge of how to teach literacy in teacher training programs and professional development opportunities (Eutsler, 2022; Kimbell-Lopez et al., 2023; Nelson et al., 2020; Robertson et al., 2020).

With the No Child Left Behind Act now enacted into law, retaining good teachers has become even harder (Behind, 2002; Georges, 2004). This law requires that all classrooms be staffed with highly qualified teachers, which applies to school libraries (AASL, 2018; Geringer,

2003; Martin, et al., 2012). However, since most educator training is content-specific, and most

educators do not receive coursework during their teacher training that enables them to focus on

literacy as the center of the content of the instruction that is being provided to learners. However

because school libraries in most states are staffed with professional librarians who are trained

through coursework to design learning opportunities with a literacy focus, collaboration among

educators and school libraries is essential to ensure learning environments contain appropriate

literary selections for learners (Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Merga, 2020; Nelson et al., 2016).

The skills of school librarians can serve as a bridge to close the literacy gap that exists among

learners (Bai, 2019; Black, 2018; Bond & Blevins, 2020; Crary, 2019; Gerson & Gerson, 2008).

As such, Castleman et al. (2016); Conley's (2007) research outline many high school

students are ill-prepared for life after graduation due to the lack of rigor in K12 learning

environments prior to graduation. However, school libraries as collaborative partners and leaders

in K12 learning environments can assist with ensuring that all learners attain an important level

of information literacy to become critical thinkers (Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Burns et al., 2021;

Conley, 2007; Copeland & Jacobs, 2017; Hammons, 2020). School libraries with educational

technology promote information literacy when collaboration with educators is front and center to

enable learners can draw inferences, interpret results, analyze source documents, and support

problems with evidence (AASL, 2018; Castleman et al., 2016; Lomos et al., 2011; Martin et al.,

2012).

The benefits of school library and educator collaboration extend well beyond the K12

learning environments (Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Cox, 2018; Crary, 2019; Kuhlthau, 2021;

Lance et al., 2010). Numerous studies document the effectiveness of school libraries as

educational partners and leaders through collaboration that contributes to learners being college

and career ready after high school graduation (Copeland & Jacobs, 2017-12; Lance & Loertscher, 2016; Lance et al., 2010; Mcclurg et al., 2019). As noted in Vercelletto (2018) research, the author discusses how the collaboration of educators at three universities and three high school libraries afforded opportunities to develop literacy instruction that would ensure learners were ready to meet the demands of a global society, whether moving on to college or matriculating into the workforce. The results indicated that school libraries as collaborative instructional partners were valuable resources in identifying ways to incorporate literacy into instruction that improved the information literacy skills of learners to prepare them for life beyond high school (Martin, et al., 2012; O'Sullivan & Dallas, 2010; Reed & Oslund, 2018).

In as much as the evidence supports the effectiveness of the academic successes of learners from collaboration, Black (2018); McKeever et al. (2017); Shannon et al. (2019) research indicates that when libraries and faculty are not connected there is a disconnect between reaching learners, creating partnerships, and aiding in the development of instructional policy that benefits the learning environment for all. Cope and Sanabria (2014); Copeland & Jacobs, 2017; Crary (2019) research notes that because educators have so many other tasks to complete during the school day, they do not have enough time to develop collaborative relationships with school libraries to intentionally focus on implementing information literacy skills into their instruction. Research notes that although many teachers are open to collaboration and willing to share the responsibility of teaching information literacy, the lack of time is the biggest culprit to collaboration. Hence, the collaboration between educators and librarians does not occur (Crary, 2019; Hammons, 2020; Lance, 2010; Mcclurg et al., 2019).

Lester's (2023) research summarizes that the role of school libraries is multifaceted. The American Library Association (ALA) (2020) notes that school libraries have a key role in

improving literacy scores and academic achievement among K12 students by providing access to resources and promoting reading and information literacy skills. To prepare learners to become college and career ready in the 21st century, educators should begin to recognize that school librarians are literacy leaders, instructional partners, information specialists, teachers, and program administrators in K12 learning environments (AASL, 2018; Burns et al., 2021; Cope & Sanabria, 2014; Geringer, 2003; Hartzell, 2002; Lee & Hannafin, 2016). And although specific best practices and roles of school libraries continue to evolve, reading, information literacy, and technology are three disciplines that continue to be a part of a school librarian's role in K12 learning environments (Lance & Maniotes, 2020; Mastur, 2023). Because the evolution of these best practices and roles are essential to ensuring that learners are prepared to move into the future (Kuhlthau, 2021) educators must begin to understand how and why learners learn.

Human Performance Technology (HPT)

People are the cornerstone and vital resources of any type of organization (Dirksen, 2016; Elander & Cronje, 2016; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Kang & Molenda, 2018). However, the ability and willingness of individuals to perform their tasks are also just as important to the successes and failures of any organization. This holds true in education, for educators and learners, too. Educators must recognize the importance of understanding how and why a learner learns, what motivates them to learn, and the impact the environment or culture has on a learner's ability to learn (Dirksen, 2016; O'Driscoll, 2015; Piaget, 1936). To appreciate this process, educators should develop an understanding of how the integration of the concept of Human Performance Technology can contribute to increased learning opportunities for learners in K12 learning environments (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2011; Wang et al., 2021).

There are numerous definitions of Human Performance Technology (HPT); however, Kang and Molenda, 2018; O'Driscoll, 2015 attribute the lack of a formal definition of HPT is due in part to the influences of research theories conducted by behaviorist and constructivist researchers. In addition to the research theories' influence, the authors note that the continuous integration of systems theories and organizational development has contributed to the inability to narrow down a true definition of HPT. However, for the purpose of this research, O'Driscoll (2015) defines HPT as "systems thinking applied to human resource activities" (p. 34).

As HPT is a systematic approach to improving performance by identifying and addressing the root causes of performance problems, the integration of HPT in K12 learning environments can have significant benefits for learners and educators alike. According to Rossett and Gautier-Downes (1991) research, HPT can be used to identify and address the factors that impact student learning, through the design of the instruction, curriculum development, and assessment strategies. By identifying and addressing factors that impact student learning, HPT can be used to improve student performance, enhance teacher effectiveness, and optimize educational processes.

In K12 learning environments, results of research conducted by Rossett & Gautier-Downs (1991); Stolovitch & Keeps (2011) conclude that integrating HPT into instruction provides educators the ability to improve how instruction is delivered to meet the needs of learners. Because HPT provides a systematic approach to analyzing educational processes, identifying performance gaps, and designing interventions to address those gaps can lead to more effective teaching and learning. Effective teaching and learning can lead to the effectiveness of the educator by identifying training and support needed that is tailored to the needs of the

educator, as well as improving student outcomes (Rossett & Gautier-Downes, 1991; van Tiem et al., (2012).

Integrating HPT in K12 learning environments can provide continuous improvement in learning environments. HPT emphasizes the importance of ongoing evaluation and feedback, which can help educators identify areas for improvement and adjust instructional design and delivery for learners. This can lead to a more dynamic and responsive educational system that contributes to improved student outcomes (Rossett & Gautier-Downes, 1991) because educators will be better able to identify the needs of their learners, rather than simply treating the symptoms. The integration of HPT in K12 learning environments has numerous benefits for learners and educators by providing a systematic approach to analyzing educational processes and addressing performance gaps, HPT can help to optimize educational outcomes and promote learner success.

The concept of HPT involves observing human performance from an environmental, skill, and motivational level. Utilizing this concept becomes a necessary step in understanding the lived experiences of educators for this research study. Although there has been much research conducted to support the added value to human performance when integrated into different organizational structures, however, little research has documented its effectiveness and the vital role the integration of HPT contributes to the field of education (Kang & Molenda, 2018; O'Driscoll, 2015). As the primary focus of HPT is to improve human performance and get positive results, this is consistent with the goal of education and the integration of this concept in learning environments can provide useful knowledge to educators when preparing learners to maneuver through life.

These systems of thinking identify the motivation for learning, environmental factors that influence learning, and the skills needed to eliminate performance deficiencies are grounded in the basic principles of psychology (Bandura, 1977; Winarti et al., 2019); Zeidner et al., 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). Basic principles of psychology are rooted in understanding how human behavior can lead to enhancing human performance. As HPT involves observing human performance from an environmental, skillful, and motivational perspective to assess and analyze the root causes of performance deficiencies, which enables educators the ability to identify and understand the reasons learners learn by analyzing the practices and processes. In doing so, integrating the concept of HPT can aid in determining whether training and interventions are necessary to improve the human performance of learners which can lead to the increased literacy of learners in K12 learning environments (Bandura, 1977; O'Driscoll, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978). Incorporating the concepts of HPT into K12 learning environments is important to the new paradigm of teaching and learning that is taking shape in K12 learning environments today. The integration of HPT will make it possible for educational institutions and teachers to create blended learning environments that are interactive and engage the learner in high-quality learning to keep learners engaged in the learning process and achieve academic success (Reigeluth et al., 2017; Shubina & Kulakli, 2019; Song & Kidd, 2009).

Experiences of Educators with Educational Technology

Technology continues to be developed to communicate information and the integration of technology as a method of teaching and learning is constantly on the rise. While educators are striving to provide instruction to develop skills that learners can use in the real world, the use of technology in learning environments makes this possible (Clote, 2017; Reigeluth, et al., 2017) as teaching and learning are becoming increasingly dependent on integrating strategies related to

instruction that improve the performance of learners. Every minute of every day, people upload hours of videos to social media platforms and snap millions of pictures on their smartphones (Bond & Blevins, 2020; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Gonzalez, 2015; Kahl, 2018). The use of technology has become a normal part of our daily lives. Its use has shifted from people adapting to modern technology to fit their needs to the development and design of modern technology to change the needs of people (White & Martin, 2014). An example of which is the integration of self-driving cars in societies. This and other technological innovations seemly are designed to influence what people need, instead of being designed to fit the needs of people (Land & Zimmerman, 2015; Mardis et al., 2001; Sacasas, 2018; Shadiev, et al., 2015).

These technological innovations subliminally alter societies' perception of space, time, and attitudes and have become material to our moral and political lives, as they are ingrained into our daily routines. Ingrained so much into the daily routines of our lives that technology becomes invisible to the point where we neglect to discern how fragile and vulnerable, we become with our dependency on technology (Sacasas, 2018). As such, research conducted by Arnaldi and Bianchi (2016); Svensson et al., 2022), suggests that technological innovation affords society the ability to control situations and outcomes.

For example, my introduction to computers and the Internet in the 1980s began with the desktop and personal computers, which is the foundation for a Western technological worldview. Taking this a bit deeper into consideration, my preference for computer technology today is the MacBook and most Apple products compared to Windows or Android products. The use of which has certainly played a role in the way I look at the use of technology and what these devices can do. This attitude and belief has contributed significantly to the type of technology

that I use when providing learning opportunities where technology is integrated into the instruction I provide (Waelbers, 2011).

While technology is continuously being developed at warp speed, Clote's (2017) research article shared that technology should not just be viewed as hardware or devices; but as an active attitude that is cultural and societal. If we view technology as Clote (2017) described, we come to recognize that recent technologies come with more power than ever. The power to make choices that we never had to make before. With this power, we must learn to make good sound decisions about the technology we use and if we do not use technology wisely, these powerful choices could result in some powerful risks to our lives.

In comparison to my introduction to computers, the younger generation's introduction to computers and the Internet has come by way of smart phones and is certainly shaping their technological worldview in a unique way. What I see as an issue with technology with this generation and in emerging markets is that we now have generations who know nothing but being constantly connected to a mobile device because they have become extremely comfortable and embrace the use technology. With this comfortable use of technology, this younger generation has no concept of time and space because of the ease and accessibility of smart devices that enable real time communication, information, and entertainment instantly. Research conducted by Arnaldi and Bianchi (2016) identifies that technology innovation has contributed to an increase of social and institutional interests and how "scientific knowledge makes us able to predict consequences; technology provides us with the means to control them" (p. 55).

The wide adoption of mobile devices has influenced education. In K12 setting, positive results from mobile learning have been reported in different subject areas including science and English as a second language (Wood et al. 2011). In the current literature, researchers reported

the positive effects of mobile- supported situated learning in science (Land & Zimmerman, 2015), math (White & Martin, 2014), and language learning (Shadiev et al., 2015). It is becoming increasingly important in societies today that learning environments are created to keep learners engaged and the role of technology has an integral part in the success of learners in K12 learning environments. Integrating educational technology in these environments should not be considered just an added tool in the toolkit for teaching and learning, but a transformational tool (Clote, 2017) that is used to improve a learner's ability to learn new knowledge and information while keeping them engaged (Gonzalez, 2015). Shubina and Kulakli (2019); Cloete (2017) research studies discussed the possibilities and benefits the use of educational technology contributes to bridging gaps to provide equitable learning opportunities for all learners.

Educational technology has become increasingly important in K12 learning environments, with many studies highlighting its contributions to improved literacy scores among students (Leal et al., 2018; Naraian, 2019; Shadiev et al., 2015; Winarti et al., 2019). One major advantage of technology in literacy education is its ability to provide individualized instruction and support to students. According to studies by Higgins et al. (2016); Shadiev et al. (2015), technology-based literacy interventions can be tailored to the needs of individual students, thereby promoting greater engagement and achievement. Such interventions include online reading programs and games and educational apps targeting specific literacy skills.

The integration of educational technology in learning environments offer educators the ability to provide immediate feedback to learners on their reading comprehension, writing, and language use, enabling them to track their progress and identify areas for improvement (Higgins et al., 2016; Schubina & Kulakli, 2019; White & Martin, 2014; Wood et al., 2011). Furthermore, technology can support collaborative learning and communication among students, enabling

them to work together on literacy tasks and projects. As a result, students can develop important social and communication skills, as well as improve their literacy skills (Zeidner et al., 2016).

Educational technology in K12 learning environments provides access to many digital resources, including e-books, online databases, and multimedia materials. Resources that can support the development of literacy skills and provide students with opportunities to explore topics in greater depth (Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Hover & Wise, 2022;2020; Leu et al., 2013). Additionally, educational technology can provide access to authentic texts from diverse cultures and perspectives, thereby promoting cultural literacy and understanding. The use of educational technology in K12 learning environments has numerous benefits for improving literacy scores among students, including individualized instruction, immediate feedback, collaborative learning, and access to diverse digital resources.

Effective technology integration has become a centerpiece of educational improvement, (Fidalgo-Blanco et al., 2018; Kahl, 2018; NETP, 2010). Educational technology in learning environments is not just hardware or devices, but an active attitude that addresses the needs and motivation of learners is cultural and societal. An active attitude that analyzes gaps to find solutions that lead to systematic, step-by-step ways to improve the performance of the learner, while producing expected outcomes (Clote, 2017; Ping et al., 2018). The current trends in e-learning, web 2.0 technologies, and mobile and wireless technologies have contributed to the creation of learning environments that span the globe. These technologies have broadened the scope and the integration of the concept of Human Performance Technology (HPT) with educational technology has contributed to a shift in the way teaching and learning are occurring in societies today (Kang & Molenda, 2018; Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018; Reigeluth et al., 2015).

New Educator Literacy and Educational Technology Training

When training educators to use new technology, it is important to consider whether educators are digital immigrants or digital natives (Bai, 2019; Ekanayake & Wishart, 2015; Mustapha et al., 2020). In contrast, Ping et al. (2018) research identified that in teacher education programs, little or limited emphasis is placed on how innovative educators are with the integration of libraries and educational technology as literacy resources in their learning environments to encourage creativity in the learning process when developing equitable strategies for learning during instruction. The successful integration of technology in learning environments requires an awareness and understanding of how outliers contribute to a learner's success (Fidalgo-Blanco, et al., 2018). Implementing HPT concepts with educational technology brings to the forefront the cause and impact outliers can have that affect human performance and has become the leading cause of a shift in what is called the new educational paradigm. A new educational paradigm that is inclusive of the active participation of learners and the integration of technology has become "ubiquitous and can provide learning at any time and in any place" (Fidalgo-Blanco et al., 2018, p. 475).

Enhancement to Learner Performance

Approximately 35% of public-school students in grade 4 were at or above Proficient in reading nationally. Patel and Anitha (2022) outlines how the new National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) is designed to address the literacy skills of collectively of learners in the 21st century. The policy strongly emphasizes and embraces the skills and expertise that school libraries and educational technology contribute to closing the gap in literacy skills for learners in today's learning environments. As it continues to become necessary to close the divide that exist in formal and vocational educational opportunities for learners to ensure learners can compete

globally, collaborating with school libraries and the inclusion of educational technology is becoming increasing more important to be incorporated in instruction being provided to learners today.

School libraries do not just aid in developing skills of reading and information in learners but are valuable resources that contribute to training in many areas that contribute to the academic success of learners (AASL, 2018; Blummer & Kenton, 2018; Chu et al., 2011; Hartzell, 2011). Collaboration with school libraries can lead to developing learners' skills that enable them to develop strong analytical, technical, and problem-solving skills that contributes to producing future leaders in the 21st century (AASL, 2018; Bond & Blevins, 2020; Brown & Keep, 2018; Hover & Wise, 2022;2020; Kahl, 2018). School libraries that integrate the use of educational technology can transform the reality of learners because of their innovativeness (Shubina & Kulakli, 2019; Cloete, 2017). These innovative tools used in collaboration with educators can enhance a learner's ability to make reasonable sound decisions regarding the value it adds to their life and what they are learning. One's motivation, ability, behavior, and attitudes contribute significantly to learning when integrating educational technology into learning environments. Gonzalez (2015) research indicates that the use of educational technology is predicated on the learners' feelings of "what is worthy, or what has merit, either in objective terms, subjective terms (as individuals) or intersubjective terms (as a group or as a society)" (p. 5), as such the use of educational technology may or may not add any benefit to the instruction being provided.

Although the field of education has turned its focus to providing learners with opportunities that will aid in the development of literacy knowledge and skills in learners. The integration and use of educational technology can ensure that all learners are provided with

equitable opportunities and tools that they will need to grow, succeed, and be prepared to compete in this global society. According to Dirksen (2016), learning may not be innate for some, however when educators and school libraries with educational technology work collaboratively in learning environments the academic success of learners improves. Because environments that are collaborative in nature provide learners with a different way to view the world that fosters creativity in learning that are guided by the educator's motivation, self-determination, and individual differences that are intrinsically connected to what they provide in the instruction in the learning environment (Dirksen, 2016; Frantzen, 2014; Schubina & Kulakli, 2019).

Learning environments that adopt HPT concepts analyze these characteristics to use as indicators to improve the performance of learners (Gerson & Gerson, 2008). The integration of HPT with educational technology provides instruction that satisfies the learners' interests, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, goals, knowledge, and experiences (Shubina & Kulakli, 2019; Reigeluth et al., 2015) to ensure improvement in a learner's performance in the learning environment. Kuhlthau's (2010) research identifies the importance of school libraries as valuable learning environments where a plethora of information is found that is relevant to the curriculum, as well as being a wonderful place to find books that contribute to learning by providing real-world experiences to readers that places emphasis on information literacy for learners in the 21st century. As noted in the most recent AASL (2007) standards, standards which are built upon information literacy that incorporates inquiry, school libraries are evolving into integral resources that will aid in increasing the literacy skills of learners in education to ensure they are prepared to compete in the global age of information upon leaving high school.

Improving the performance of learners by integrating HPT concepts with educational technology addresses and potentially satisfies the experiences of learners and ensure improved human performance and success in the achievement of learners learning environment (Shubina & Kulakli, 2019). According to research conducted by Hover and Wise, (2022; 2020), the impact on student achievement in K12 learning environments can lead to an increase in learner engagement and literacy skills. As the future of education continues to evolve to nurture students to be more connected in their lives and equipped for the future, the integration of HPT with the use of educational technology and pedagogy can ensure learners are ready for the changing needs of society (Gonzalez, 2015; Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018).

Accordingly, Gerson and Gerson (2008) research outlines that when integrating the concepts of HPT with educational technology in learning environments, inequities and obstacles are identified that can be addressed to satisfy the needs of learners, as well as prepare learners for the future efficiently and effectively. Integrating HPT concepts with educational technology closes the gaps in learning environments by incorporating strategies and interventions as the principles of HPT blend the philosophies of the objectivist and constructivist theories of learning (Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Unfortunately, past research on the impact HPT and educational technology has on the performance of learners appears to have been implemented unsuccessfully.

However, Carr (1997) research identified and recognized the systematic and systemic benefits of integrating HPT concepts with educational technology in learning environments and continued research indicates that integrating HPT concepts with educational technology in learning environments empowers users. Empowering users, teachers, students, and other stakeholders, with the ability to become decision-makers in the learning process and

environments; whereby, users and stakeholders provide opportunities for collaboration. This type

of collaboration, as Carr (1997) noted empowers and enables learners to become actively

involved and engaged in the learning process thereby improving the learner's academic

performance in the learning environment.

Although the application of HPT concepts with educational technology in learning

environments might cause some teachers to think that incorporating HPT is just one more thing

to do to complicate lesson planning and increase their workload, Gerson and Gerson (2018)

research indicates that if given careful thought and planning, when integrating HPT with

educational technology in the classrooms, instruction will become more effective. Clote (2017);

Brown & Keep (2018) articulate in their research that the effectiveness of blending HPT and

educational technology in learning environments will better equip teachers to provide learning

that is equitable for all learners. It is very unlike the traditional or objectivist methods of teaching

and learning where information is transferred from one person to many at the same time and in

the same place. As such, learners will become more effective at transferring knowledge into the

real world and demonstrate improved performance. ⌷

In learning environments, incorporating HPT concepts with educational technology that

blends the objectivist and constructivist theories can positively impact a learner's performance

(Dirksen, 2016). Blending these theories through the integration of HPT concepts with

educational technology is changing how instruction is designed and provided from the traditional

or objectivist theoretical methods of teaching and learning to ensure that instruction for learners

is more learner centered. This shift in teaching and learning is more inclusive of the theories of

constructivism and social learning (Dirksen, 2016) that are focused on how to improve a

learner's performance. The improvement of learner performance in learning environments today

necessitates the need to understand the motivation and behavior of learners. Including HPT concepts to develop strategies that work in unison with educational technology can improve the human performance of learners in learning environments (Elander & Cronje, 2016; Frantzen, 2014).

Accordingly, Clote (2017) research indicates that the use of educational technology as a stand-alone to measure learning's impact presents barriers to learning for some. However, when HPT concepts are integrated with educational technology collaboratively into learning environments, it is possible to begin to understand a learner's skills, knowledge, and motivation for learning. In these inclusive learning environments, learners are provided and equipped with the tools to complete tasks, mitigate, and reduce some of the problems that might be encountered before they occur. Collectively, the author notes that the integration of HPT with educational technology become powerful tools that work together in learning environments by ensuring that instruction has taken into consideration why the learner is there, understands what is being learned, to meet the needs of the learner to impact the learner's human performance.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological transcendental study is to discover how educators view the use of school libraries with educational technology's contribution to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020), along with integrating the concepts of Human Performance Technology (HPT) contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners. This study intends to provide vivid imagery of how the prior experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology have contributed to how they use these resources in their professional lives. This study will demonstrate how educators view the use of school libraries with educational technology's

contribution to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020).

School libraries provide students with access to a wide range of reading materials in digital and printed formats that can contribute significantly to increasing the reading and literacy skills of learners (Lance & Loertscher, 2016). With school libraries, the integration of educational technology into K12 learning environments presents educators with another resource that adds value to learning that can aid in making learning more interactive and engaging for learners, as well as offer ways for educators to quickly access data and analytics that can be used to monitor student progress and identify areas for improvement (Lyon & McKinney, 2011).

Because the concept of Human Performance Technology (HPT) provides a systematic approach to identifying and addressing performance gaps (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2011), integrating HPT into curriculum in K12 learning environments affords educators the ability to analyze educational processes and identifying performance gaps that exist in learners. In as much that the use of educational technology in learning environments is not something new, current research continues to note a lack of HPT concepts embedded in curriculums. As the trends in e-learning, web 2.0 technologies, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) continue to contribute to the creation of learning environments that are global, the need to address literacy continues to broaden, it is becoming vital that these tools and resources are integrated into K12 learning environments as collaborative instructional partners.

The integration of HPT concepts with educational technology is a phoneme for future exploration that can determine if there is any impact on a learner's performance when used with educational technology in learning environments. As this review indicates, there have been attempts to integrate HPT concepts into educational learning environments that have been

unsuccessful throughout history. However, it has become important that the field of education

come to embrace the concepts of HPT to ensure that the instruction provided in learning

environments ensures that all learners are ready to live, work, and play in a global society.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological transcendental study was to discover how educators view the use of school libraries with educational technology's contribution to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). Chapter Three outlines the methods used in this research, inclusive of the research design, procedures, data collection, data analysis plans, and summary. The data collection methods consisted of journaling by the researcher and participants, semi-structured interviews, and a focus group. The data collection methods used for this study offered insight into how the lived experiences of educators have contributed to their attitudes and beliefs of whether school libraries with educational technology impact the development of the literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Research Design

In qualitative research, phenomenology seeks to understand human experience (Moustakas, 1994) by exploring a phenomenon to understand how the phenomena is perceived and experienced by human subjects to determine if individual participants of the study share any characteristics related to the phenomena. The author shared that the foundation of transcendental phenomenology is predicated on being open to new things and ideas however, to grasp and understand the concept of transcendental phenomenology, one must recognize one's own biases and preconceived notions about a matter to have an open mind. This process of self-awareness in qualitative research is known as epoché which enabled me to understand and get a clear picture of the phenomena being studied. Pilosophically, "what is perceived and what is experienced" are

related in the realm of studying human experiences (p. 69), and to understand the reality of a phenomenon is to understand the phenomenon as it is lived by a person.

Moustakas (1994) discussed at length the philosophical views of Husserl (1931) that led to the development of the conceptual framework known as transcendental phenomenology. The conceptual framework of transcendental phenomenology embodies the use of one's prior knowledge and background experience. Accordingly, the author wrote that Edmund Husserl is credited for the conceptual framework around the concept of transcendental phenomenology and that it has become widely accepted as a philosophical approach to qualitative research methodology when seeking to understand human experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas's (1994) research describes prior knowledge and background experience as natural phonemes in the study of the science of humans and it is grounded in the theory of psychology. Therefore, gaining an understanding of "what appears in consciousness" (p. 26) is important to understanding how transcendental phenomenology relates to the noema and noesis. In effect this study sought to understand if the experiences of how educators interacted with school libraries with educational technology during their early years of education contributed to their attitudes and beliefs about the value of these resources as literacy tools. Imploring the use of a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018) for this study aided in determining whether educators believe that the contribution of school libraries with educational technology are significant in the development of literacy skills in K12 learning environments today.

As the twenty-first century has brought about an increase in the use of technology in teaching and learning (Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018; Piaget, 1936), this study sought to ascertain if the emotional and intellectual views of educators concerning whether the integration of

technology in learning environments today has any impact to the development of literacy skills of K12 learners. Moustakas's (1994) and Piaget's (1936) research falls well in line with the social constructivist epistemology, where one seeks to understand an individual's psychological and emotional connection to a specific topic based on their lived experiences, interaction, collaboration, and authentic work. As such, social constructivists believe that one's ability to learn depends on the learner's behavioral and cognitive capacity to process information, independent interactions, and their experiences (Bond & Blevins, 2020; Bandura, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978).

Research Questions

Central Research Question

How do educators describe their professional experiences with school libraries and educational technology?

Sub-Question One

How do the early childhood experiences of educators with school libraries and technology impact the way they provide literacy instruction to learners in their professional lives?

Sub-Question Two

How do educators as instructional leaders describe their experiences using school libraries and educational technology as resources when developing literacy instruction in K12 learning environments?

Sub-Question Three

How do educators describe their critical self-reflection experiences when making informed decisions to create and provide literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries

and educational technology?

<div align="center">**Site and Participants**</div>

Site

Creswell and Poth (2018) identify the setting in research as an important aspect of ensuring the validity of a research study. The sites selected for this study consisted of a total of six schools from three public school districts that receive federal Title I funding located in Central Virginia. From each of the three school districts, three elementary (K5) and middle (6-8) schools were selected for this study. The districts selected for this study reflect learning environments that deliver instruction to learners in urban, small, and suburban communities. Each selected school district, the individual sites, and each of the participants were assigned a pseudonym to protect their identities and ensure confidentiality during the study. Additionally, the selection of the sites chosen for this study provided and ensured that the data collected from this study provided diversity due to the variation in the population and the demographics of learners in those settings.

The first school district sampled, pseudonym (AED), consisted of one elementary school, pseudonym (ZTQ), and one middle school, pseudonym (HSL), located in an urban school district in Central Virginia where at least 50,000 people live, work, and play. Sample school district number two selected, pseudonym (KMP), consisted of one elementary school, pseudonym (RXB), and one middle school, pseudonym (NTU), located in a small school district in Central Virginia with a population of where less than 5,000 people live, work, and play. The third sample school district, pseudonym (TYZ), consisted of one elementary school, pseudonym (GAB), and one middle school, pseudonym (LZN) located in suburban Central Virginia where at least 25,000 people live, work, and play. All the data from each school will be collected from the 2022-2023

school year.

Participants

Bowen (2008) research indicates that 10 to 12 participants are sufficient to reach saturation and develop a thematic analysis when conducting qualitative research. The participants for this research study involved 12 educators from the three school districts sampled. The participant sample consisted of six educators from three K5 elementary schools and six educators from three 6-8 middle schools in Central Virginia. From each of the three school districts, the 12 participants had to meet the criteria of being licensed to teach in the State of Virginia. The participants in the study were school-building level educators with an endorsement in one of the following areas: Library/Media, Reading, English, or Administration and Supervision (See Table 2). Those selected to participate in the study were recruited because of their experiences with the phenomenon and their willingness to commit to the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Diversity among participants was important to this research to ensure that I was afforded the ability to gain an understanding of the beliefs and attitudes from many different perspectives. As such, the educator participants solicited for this study were of a diverse population of educators with less than five years' experience to more than 10 years of experience with the phoneme. The participants in this study were building-level educators who were assistant principals, English teachers, reading specialists, or Library/Media specialists who met the criteria as outlined.

Recruitment Plan

   The sites and participants for this study were recruited from three public school districts in Central Virginia. Participant recruitment came from three elementary and three middle schools located in an urban, rural, and suburban school district for the 2022-23 school year. These sites and participants were selected because they will provide a variation in the population, demographics, and funding type.

  For this study, 12 participants were recruited. Recruitment of participants initially involved purposive sampling; however, the final participants for this research were solicited utilizing the snowballing method necessary to ensure saturation. All potential participants were interviewed, and the information was shared with each regarding the type of research study, why it was being conducted, the benefits and any risks that associated with the study, and how the study will be conducted. Participants were assured of confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms and they were informed about how information gathered from the data sources would be used and how the study's information would be protected. Once the participants were informed of the process and procedures and agreed to participate, a formal consent form was sent to each participant for signature and stored securely.

  Recruitment for this research study involved gathering the email addresses of educators in the selected districts. The email addresses of the participants recruited for this study were obtained from each school district's website. An email with a recruitment letter requesting their participation in the study was sent with a link to an online screening survey, using Google Forms (See Appendix C). The recruitment letter was emailed to participants who were K12 educators licensed to teach in the State of Virginia and meet two of the three following criteria: (a) educators who possess an endorsed in Library/Media PreK12; (b) educators with a State of

Virginia K12 supervision and administration endorsement; (c) educators with a State of Virginia reading specialist endorsement.

Once selected, participants in the study were sent a consent form to sign (See Appendix C). Upon receipt of the signed consent form (See Appendix C) from each participant, pseudonyms were assigned, and each participant was sent an emailed separately with dates to schedule an interview. Approximately 48 hours (about 2 days) after receipt of the participants' signed consent forms, the consenting participants were emailed a copy of their signed consent form (See Appendix C), along with the journal prompts (See Appendix H), interview questions (See Appendix D), focus group questions (See Appendix E), along with information regarding next steps.

Researcher's Positionality

This research study sought to find meaning in the thought, memory, imagination, emotion, and desire of the experiences of educators in relationship to how and when they were introduced to school libraries and educational technology. To develop an understanding of the lived experiences of the participants by exploring their experiences related to the central phenomenon is why a transcendental phenomenology method was the design of choice for this study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). To gain an understanding of how and when educators were introduced to school libraries and educational technology in their early lives to demonstrate how their experiences impact how these resources are introduced as literacy tools in learning environments that can contribute to the development of literacy skills to improve the academic results of learners in K12 learning environments was critical to this study.

Interpretive Framework

Creswell and Poth (2018) research identifies many paradigms of interpretive frameworks.

For this research study, the framework that articulates and aligns well with the theoretical framework chosen for this study of Activity theory (Vygotsky & Leont'ev's, 1978) is that of social constructivism. As a qualitative researcher, I have realized that my thoughts lean heavily toward social constructivism (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The concept of Activity theory is that it is centered around the activities of those who engage in dialogue to understand different perspectives which emphasizes the importance of understanding the social and cultural context of an activity.

As such, Activity theory and social constructivism imply the importance of the social, psychological, and emotional that enable learners to learn (Gangwar & Savita, 2017). As learners, we acquire knowledge through our interactions and apply what we have learned to our experiences. Therefore, I believe the paradigm of social constructivism as the interpretative framework for this study directly correlates with Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) Activity theory as this theory provided the opportunity to delve deeper into how the attitudes and beliefs of educators formulated by their early experiences with school libraries and educational technology during their formative years and how those experiences manifest into their professional lives.

Philosophical Assumptions

Creswell and Poth's (2018) research outlined that whether consciously or subconsciously when conducting research, as humans we all bring what we believe and know from our experiences that have shaped our attitudes and beliefs about a specific phenomenon. As such, the authors advised researchers to become aware of any biases that might exist that could impact the research study. Although our beliefs and philosophical assumptions regarding a particular subject, Cuthbertson et al. (2020) research on philosophical assumptions in qualitative research

identifies how utilizing this type of assumption offers qualitative researchers the ability to "provide unique and valuable insight of the experiences and behaviours" (p. 1) of research study participants when studying a particular phenomenon.

Ontological Assumption

The ontological assumption questions the nature of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I am always curious to understand how one's view of reality in a situation is or is not consistent with the actual reality of the situation. As such, I often wonder if there is a relationship in the realities to an individual's psychological, emotional, and human needs in specific situations and the role their life experiences have contributed. My ontological assumption is that each of the participants will have had different experiences with school libraries and educational technology during their early childhood that will impact the way, as educators, they use school libraries and educational technology in their professional lives. The study aimed to understand how the experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology impacted their ability to recognize these resources as valuable literacy tool that contributes to the development of literacy in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Epistemological Assumption

The epistemological assumption identified subjective evidence from participants that was derived from their personal views and thoughts that enabled the ability of the researcher to gain knowledge of experiences experienced by the participants with the phoneme (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the authors noted, the epistemological assumption addresses what counts as knowledge, how knowledge is validated and supported, and concludes whether there is a connection between what is being researched and the researcher (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As this assumption is subjective in nature, the epistemological assumption supports a social

constructivist and interpretive paradigm by considering multiple social realities resulting from negotiating social actors' interpretations (Sandu & Unguru, 2017).

My epistemological assumption was that the participants in this study would demonstrate their knowledge of the contribution that school libraries and educational technology would make to promoting literacy among K12 learners. To determine the attitudes and beliefs of the participant educators in this study, it was equally important that I as the researcher work to ensure that any biases, I possess were nonexistent. To recognize any biases that existed, to ensure that I remained neutral during my research went a long way toward ensuring that the conclusions from this study were based solely on the experiences of the participants' attitudes and beliefs of the impact school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills in K12 learning environments.

Axiological Assumption

An axiological assumption characterizes qualitative research by disclosing the attitudes and beliefs of the researcher in connection to the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My axiological assumption is that I place immense value on the role school libraries and educational technology as instructional resources have in aiding in the development of literate learners in K12 learning environments who are prepared to enter a global workforce. To ensure that I remained objective during this study, I acknowledged that my biases about the subject existed which enabled me to recognize the significance of the participants who developed a deeper understanding of the positive impact these tools can contribute when collaboration and training were at the forefront of developing instructional practices in K12 learning environments.

Researcher's Role

The researcher's primary role in a phenomenology study is to serve as the tool for data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018). As the human instrument in this study, I recognized and practiced epoché by documenting my biases that were a result of my personal views and opinions that I have developed in my experiences as a teacher-librarian in K12 learning environments over the last 10 years. Understanding my biases enabled me to conduct research that is trustworthy because putting my views and opinions aside ensured that my research was credible (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

The biases that existed in this study are a result of my own experiences as a teacher-librarian over the past 10 years. My biases in the study result from witnessing the lack of value educators place on school libraries and educational technology as collaborative resources that can be integral in aiding the development of literacy skills in learners when designing literacy instruction. The field of education and those leading instruction do not recognize that school libraries have been taking on a leadership role in literacy over the last few years. I did not enter the field of education until the last 15 years and I did not pursue higher education until I was well into my 40's. However, I went on to earn a master's degree in library science and information technology that involved pursuing and earning my master's while working in the field of education. This was a revelation for me, and I began to recognize how little educators supported or even understood what the role of school libraries and educational technology meant or could mean to the academic successes of learners.

Because I am invested in developing collaborative relationships with educators and learners to close learning gaps, but often with little to no support from the educators in my building; therefore, for this study, I must ensure that I keep my biases in check during the

research process. As such, I will practice epoché and maintain a reflective journal (Moustakas, 1994), in which I will keep notes of my responses to the same interview and focus group questions as the participants selected for the study to further bracket my experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). To ensure that my biases are filtered during the collection of my data, I will use the process of memoing that will be used in the analysis of the data I will have collected.￼

Procedures

The procedures section in Chapter Three follows the systematic methods of a qualitative study (Moustakas, 1994). This study utilized a transcendental phenomenological design. The first step necessary for me to conduct my research was to obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Liberty University (See Appendix B), as Creswell and Creswell (2018); Creswell and Poth (2018), identify this approval is a requirement of research to ensure that researchers follow federal regulations to protect the rights of human subject when conducting research. Upon receiving IRB approval, I then sought approval from the school districts and independent sites for participation in my research study (See Appendix A). Upon receiving the necessary site approval, I was then able to begin recruiting participants and conducting my research by collecting the data.

Data Collection Plan

Creswell and Poth (2018); Moustakas (1994) research indicate that the types of data collection appropriate to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study can include, but are not limited to, interviews, observations, documents, and audiovisual materials. This data collection plan indicated below identifies the types of data collected and how the data for this research was analyzed. The data collection methods for this study included participant and researcher journals, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. To establish a comfort level

between the interviewer and the interviewees, I ensured that I gained an understanding of the

attitudes and beliefs of the interviewees regarding the topic of research using the five senses

(Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and to facilitate bracketing and coding to recognize emerging themes

that appeared regarding the phenomena from the responses of the participants.

Journal Prompt Data Collection Approach

The importance of meaningful reflection and the journal prompt data collection approach

for this study was intended to complement the individual participant and focus group interviews.

Journal writing is designed to illuminate the understanding of the emotional attributes of one's

experiences with a particular phenomenon. The research concludes that data collection using

journaling in qualitative research offers many benefits for educators to explore and enhance their

teaching practices Moustakas, (1994); Nelson et al., (2016).

Journaling in this study afforded the participants with a reflective space to document their

thoughts, experiences, and observations related to their attitudes and beliefs about the

contributions to literacy that school libraries and educational technology provide as resources in

K12 learning environments. Through the process of journaling, educators were able to engage in

self-reflection, and critically examine their strategies for literacy instruction, while gaining

insight into their instructional practices (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This reflective practice allowed

educators to refine their teaching methods, identify areas for improvement, and make informed

decisions about their pedagogical approaches, to enhance their effectiveness.

To capture the complexities and nuances of the lived experiences of the participants, each

participant was emailed an electronic journal with three guiding prompts to be completed within

one week of receipt. Participants used these prompts to document their day-to-day encounters of

interactions with learners, instructional colleagues, and building leaders to create a detailed

record of their professional journey (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Wolcott, 1994). This rich

qualitative data provided a deeper understanding of the contextual factors that influenced their

attitudes and beliefs when it comes to providing literacy instruction by providing valuable

insights into the intricacies of the educational environment.

Semi-Structured Interview Data Collection Approach

Moustakas (1994) research identifies interviews as a method to engage participants in the

research process that can be used to collect data on the research topic and uses questions to guide

the study in determining the factors in behaviors and experiences. The procedures for conducting

this study and the collection, storing, and analysis of the data collected for the individual

interview began with an independent review of the interview questions by an expert in student

literacy being conducted before using the interview questions. The virtual interviews with

individual participants occurred at the end of the day, between the hours of 4 and 7 p.m.

Conducting individual interviews at the end of the day between the hours noted, afforded the

participants the ability to settle down from their day, be focused, and ensured uninterrupted time

could be set aside to be an active participant when being interviewed.

Participants were notified via email invitations to schedule the virtual interviews. The

email invitations included information regarding the selection process, along with the guarantee

of confidentiality during the interviews. The email invitations for the interviews also contained

information about the selection process. At the start of each interview, the guarantee of

confidentiality was reiterated to the participants during the interview and throughout the research

study. Each participant interview was scheduled for one hour but generally lasted approximately

45 minutes. The time limit set was to ensure that there was ample time for participants to respond

and reflect on the semi-structured open-ended interview questions (See Appendix D).

The individual interviews for this study were conducted virtually, recorded and transcribed. Using a semi-structured data collection process method, the interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams as the video conferencing platform and utilized two recording devices which consisted of using the voice memo recorder feature on an iPhone and the recording feature via Teams, and transcribed via the transcription feature in Teams, as well. As Nelson et al. (2016); Creswell and Poth, (2018) express the importance of meaningful reflection throughout the process of collecting data, I asked each of the participants to journal their thoughts after each interview. Which for this study was intended to complement the individual participant interviews as this enabled the participant to do some self-reflection with regards to the research topic and gain personal insight on their perceptions and beliefs toward the contribution of libraries and technology to the development of literacy skills in K12 learners.

After each interview, I asked additional questions for clarity and accuracy of the participants regarding their responses. Each participant was provided a summary of the major points of the interview to employ the process of member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Recording the interviews and participant journaling ensured that their thoughts, views, and opinions were captured accurately and precisely to gather an accurate depiction of their experiences. Ensuring an accurate depiction enabled the ability to allow coding and the development of themes to triangulate data related to the perception that educators have about libraries, technology, and the contribution each of these impact the development of cognitive and literacy skills of K12 learners with the other data collected during the study.

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Hello and thank you for participating. Please introduce yourself.

2. How long have you been an educator, and in your current role? CRQ

3. What motivated you to pursue a career in education? CRQ

4. Were there books in your home when growing up? If so, was there someone who read to you regularly and what type of books were read to you? If not, why do you think there were none? SQ1

5. How often did you visit the school library during your formative years? If you never visited the school library, what prevented you from visiting? SQ1

6. Did you enjoy going to the library during your youth? If yes, what activities did you participate in when visiting? If not, what would you have preferred to have done instead? SQ1

7. What role do you believe school libraries have in developing literacy skills in learners? CRQ

8. In your view, how does collaboration between school libraries and educators increase literacy among learners in K12 learning environments? SQ2

9. To what degree do you think collaboration with school libraries impacted student learning in the 21st century? SQ3

10. Tell me about your experiences providing literacy instruction to learners? CRQ & SQ3

11. What techniques do you use, or did you use in the classroom to get and keep students engaged as active participants in their own learning? SQ2

12. What is your level of expertise with the use of educational technology in learning environments? SQ1

13. How do you think integrating technology into learning environments impacts the development of literacy skills in learners? SQ2

14. To what degree do you think educational technology has in developing the literacy skills of learners in the 21st century? CRQ & SQ3

15. What are your experiences integrating educational technology into literacy instruction that you provide to learners? SQ1 & SQ3

16. What role do you believe educational technology in learning environments has on the development of literacy skills in learners? SQ1

17. What techniques do you use, or have you used in the classroom to get and keep students engaged as active participants in their own learning? SQ2

18. How would you suggest libraries and technology be integrated into classroom curricula in learning environments? CRQ & SQ1

19. In your current role, when collaborating with other educators to develop literacy activities and events in the learning environment, how do you share your vision for promoting literacy? CRQ & SQ2

20. How do you describe your self-reflection experiences when communicating your vision for designing literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology? CRQ & SQ3

Focus Group Data Collection Approach

The focus group was guided by questions that specifically focused on the participants' views of school libraries and educational technology. Each participant in the focus group was provided with a sample discussion guide that identified the purpose of the group and the discussion. The focus group was held virtually using Microsoft Teams as the video conferencing platform and utilized two recording devices which consisted of using the voice memo recorder feature on an iPhone and the recording feature via Teams, and transcribed via the transcription

feature in Teams, as well. All 12 participants in the study were invited to be a part of the focus group, and seven of the 12 participants accepted. The virtual focus group lasted approximately one hour and occurred on a weekend between the hours of 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. Conducting the virtual focus group between the hours noted, affords the participants the ability to settle down from their day, be focused, and ensure uninterrupted time was set aside to be an active participant in the focus group.

Participants were notified via email invitations individually to participate in the focus group 48 hours before the group meeting. Each email invitation included a calendar invite with the date, time, and the virtual meeting link. The email invitations also assured participants of the safeguards that would be in place to ensure confidentiality that included their assigned pseudonyms. Each participant was informed that they would enter the virtual meeting with cameras and audio automatically set to be off.

Focus Group Questions

1. Hello and thank you for participating, please introduce yourself to the group. CRQ

2. How long have you been an educator, and what is your current role? CRQ

3. What motivated you to pursue a career in education? CRQ

4. What role did libraries have in the pursuit of your education? SQ1

5. What purpose do you think libraries have in schools and communities? SQ1

6. What changes are taking place in learning environments and what effect will the changes have on learners? CRQ

7. How do you think school libraries contribute to the development of literacy skills in learners today? SQ2

8. How do you think children who are read to during their formative years impact the way they view literacy?

9. How do you think the integration of educational technology into learning environments can contribute to the development of literacy skills in learners today? SQ2

10. How would you suggest libraries and schools collaborate to impact the academic successes of students in K12 learning environments in the future? SQ3

11. Would you like to share anything further?

Data Analysis

For this transcendental phenomenological study, the data was collected using a systematic approach to capture the essence and meaning of participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Systematic data analysis ensured that emerging themes and descriptions of the phenomenon were accurately captured to develop emerging themes that included illustrations and significant statements from the participants (Koops, 2017; Moustakas, 1994). Synthesizing data in a transcendental phenomenological research study involves a unique approach that focuses on understanding the essence and structure of participants' lived experiences.

To synthesize the data in this research, the process of phenomenological reduction, also known as epoché, was employed. The process of phenomenological reduction involved bracketing or setting aside any preconceived notions, biases, and assumptions so that I could view the data with fresh eyes (Van Manen, 2014). To accomplish this, I began by suspending judgment and personal interpretations so that I could delve into the raw data and engage in a process of open-minded exploration. During the analysis of the data collected, I was looking to identify underlying meanings, essences, and patterns that constitute the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994) from the data collected of the responses of the participants. Analysing the

data collected from the participant responses consisted of hours of multiple readings of the data collected from the journals, interviews, and focus group to develop and find similarities in their responses to develop codes for themes and patterns, and organizing the findings into a coherent structure that represented the essence of the phenomenon under study.

Journal Prompts Data Analysis Plan

Research by Bentz and Shapiro (1998) posits that phenomenology research focuses on describing human experiences as they are being experienced. As the direction of this research was to ascertain how the attitudes and beliefs of educators are influenced by past experiences, I used the participant journals to collect data that offered in-depth details of how the participants felt about the impact school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills in K12 learning environments. Conducting data analysis of journal prompts in qualitative research involves several steps to derive meaningful insights from the collected data.

First, I familiarized myself with the data to gain a holistic understanding of the content. The analysis required me to read each of the participants' journal entries multiple times, taking notes and making initial observations. The process enabled me to begin to identify recurring themes, significant events, and noteworthy patterns. Once I had identified recurring themes, events, and patterns, I then began the process of coding. In this process of analysis, I categorize, and label segments of data based on the content and relevance to the research topic. With this process I was able to develop some initial codes that captured key ideas, concepts, or themes that were present in the journal prompt responses of the participants. At the onset of this coding process, I had developed some pre-established categories or deductive coding and I applied them systematically to the journal entries to ensure consistency and coherence during this analysis process.

Once the coding process was complete, I wanted to group similar codes to form higher-order themes. Here, I was looking for patterns, connections, and relationships among the codes to identify overarching themes or concepts. At this point, I began to refine and revise the themes as I continued to analyze the data, ensuring they accurately represented the content and meaning of the journal responses. Next, I went through the process of interpreting and synthesizing by analyzing the themes that had developed to determine if any interrelationships existed that would afford me the ability to comprehensively interpret the data as I considered the context, participants' perspectives, and the purpose of my research to provide meaningful insights and explanations. The connections enabled me to triangulate the data to make any connections that existed between the themes, relevant theoretical frameworks, or existing literature that would enable me to strengthen the validity and reliability of the analysis of this study.

Semi-Structured Interview Data Analysis Plan

The individual interviews were conducted using Microsoft Teams using the recording and transcription option available within the platform. After each interview, the study participants were emailed the transcript of the interview for member checking and to validate their responses to each question for accuracy. The process for analyzing the interviews involved me repeatedly watching the videos, to visually observe how the participants responded to the questions. In addition, I read, and re-read the interview transcripts to check for errors. If corrections were needed, I noted the corrections on a sticky note, using the tools available within the document, and uploaded the document and video recording into the QDA Miner software for further analysis.

Upon completing the process of analyzing the participants' interviews, an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) of the data collected was done. The process of using IPA

enabled me to understand what the experiences of the participants were like and how the

participants viewed the way libraries and technology are introduced and utilized in their learning

environments (Smith, 2011; Moustakas, 1994). With this process, I was able to identify some

themes and patterns that existed in the interviews that explained the perceptions of the educators

in the study around the use of libraries and technology in their learning environments. The data

was then entered into the QDA Miner software program to assist with developing labels for

coding and categorizing for further analysis.

Research conducted by Saldana (2020) defines coding as the first step in the analysis of

qualitative data. During the coding process, I assigned words or short phrases to the verbal and

written responses obtained from the interviews of the study participants. The assignment of

words or short phrases offered me to ability to capture the essence of the thoughts and beliefs of

the participants in this study. Capturing the attitudes and beliefs of the interview participants by

assigning words or short phrases from their responses afforded me the ability to categorize the

data essential to ascertaining any correlation in responses in each interview. During this process

as the researcher, I was able to further group related information from answers to the research

questions from each participant to make coding and categorizing the data easier to note themes

that were found to be common from each of the participant's interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Focus Group Data Analysis Plan

The focus group for this study was conducted using Microsoft Teams using the recording

and transcription option available within the platform. After the focus group had concluded, each

participant was emailed the transcript from the focus group for member checking and to validate

their responses to each question for accuracy. The process for analyzing the data obtained from

the focus group involved me watching the video from the group meeting to visually observe how

the participants responded to the questions. In addition, I read, and re-read the focus group

transcripts to check for errors. If corrections were needed, I noted the corrections on a sticky

note, using the tools available within the document. and uploaded the transcribed document and

video recording into the QDA Miner software for further analysis.

Patton (2015) discusses the use of focus groups to confirm and expand on patterns and

themes revealed in the analysis of initial data. With the data collected from the focus group

interviews, I was able to transcribe and employ the use of the interpretative phenomenological

analysis (IPA) method to triangulate the individual responses of the participants conducted from

the focus group (Creswell & Poth, 2018). With the process of using IPA in the analysis of the

focus group data, I was able to better understand what the experiences of the participants were

like and how those experiences impact the way school libraries and educational technology are

introduced and utilized in their learning environments (Moustakas, 1994; Smith, 2011).

To begin the process of analyzing the data from the focus group, the process of margin

coding was used to assign identifiers to the questions in the discussion guides that were shared

with the participants when the email invitation is sent. The process of margin coding was also

used to assign identifiers to all common themes that emerged from the review of the recording

and the transcribed notes from the responses of the focus group participants (Bertrand et al.,

1992). After the responses from the recording and notes had been transcribed and categorized per

the identifiers that I had previously assigned, the audio recording from the virtual focus group

was uploaded into the QDA Miner software program for further development of common themes

related to the participants' experiences with school libraries and educational technology for

further analysis.

The QDA Miner software program was the tool that helped me develop additional codes and categorize the data gathered from the audio responses of the focus group participants. The use of this method of verification assisted me with documenting any correlation in responses that existed that may have been missed during the initial transcribing of the notes from the individual interviews and focus group conversations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process allowed me the ability to further group related information from answers to the research question from each participant to make coding the data easier to note themes that are common among the responses from each of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

<center>**Trustworthiness**</center>

Stahl and King's (2020); Creswell and Poth, (2018) research illustrate that the triangulation of multiple methods of data sources serves to create confidence in others in the trustworthiness and credibility of the qualitative research conducted. As such, Lincoln and Guba's (1985) research outlines four approaches to establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research that qualitative researchers must consider when performing qualitative research. The authors identify credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to validate the data collected through analysis in qualitative research. Additionally, trustworthiness in qualitative research must also ensure that ethical consideration is provided and disclosed in the type of research, and those who participate in the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Credibility

The credibility of my data was measured throughout the data collection process. Although there are many methods to ensure that the data collected is appropriate, I utilized the process of triangulation and the technique of member checking after each recorded individual and focus group interviews (Stahl & King, 2020; Nelson et al., 2016) to ensure my data was

credible. Triangulation was reached and supported the credibility of this study when themes were revealed from the individual and focus group interviews, participant reflective journals, and audio recordings, that were used to validate this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As much as I recognized my own biases and preconceived thoughts and ideas about my research topic, I worked intensively to bracket my biases (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994), so that the process of member checking would provide participants the opportunity to validate the transcribed versions of the interviews by reviewing and verifying the accuracy and completeness of their statements.

Transferability

The process of ensuring the transferability of the research is the capability to be transferred to other settings and situations (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In the research, I was provided with detailed descriptions of the experiences of the participants to gather a thick and rich knowledge of their experiences (Stahl & King, 2020; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In describing the experiences of the participants and the research process, the research reader can ascertain if the research is transferable to their setting or situation (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). This research study will focused on how educators perceive the integration of libraries and technology in learning environments to support the development of literacy skills in K12 learners.

Understanding how prior experiences with school libraries and educational technology can aid K12 educators with the ability to recognize the benefits of including libraries as collaborative partners in the development of learners' literacy skills. Yet, there are some limitations to the overall transferability of this study due to the sample size and background of the participants. However, it was my goal to provide detail and context to demonstrate to educators the effectiveness of libraries and technology collaboratively can add to the successful

academic achievements of K12 learners.

Dependability

The dependability of this study can be determined by the stability of the findings over time (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The dependability of this research study can add value with the creation of an outline of the research process, the creation of an audit trail (See Appendix F), and the use of an auditor to examine the research process and how it is conducted. The creation of these tools can ensure that the data collection and analysis process is transparent to ensure that participant responses to their experiences with libraries and technology can be easily replicated by others (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Confirmability

The creation of an audit trail aided in reducing research bias. The creation of the audit trail through memoing and reflective journaling aided in adding credibility to this study (See Appendix F). The auditor was constant throughout the study to ensure the accuracy of the information collected to ensure confirmability to the degree the findings were able to be validated and confirmed by others (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In addition, member checking was used during the individual and focus group interviews where participants were provided an opportunity to review transcribed interviews for completeness and accuracy.

Ethical Considerations

The principles of ethical consideration to consider when conducting qualitative research involving human subjects according to Corple et al. (2020); Creswell and Poth (2018) are beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy; and equitable risk, benefit, and cost to the individual's participating in the research study. Ethical consideration for this study involved obtaining IRB

and individual site approval. Careful consideration was given to the recruitment process for this study whereby information pertaining to the study regarding what the study was about, that their participation was voluntary, and their ability to withdraw at anytime were all available options during this study.

Permissions

To conduct this study, I completed and submitted the IRB application for consideration and approval. Once I had obtained IRB approval (See Appendix B) from my institution, I then requested participation from the three school districts I wanted to participate in my research (See Appendix A). I verified if the individual sites selected for this study required independent IRB approval to participate in my study, which was not needed. However, if individual site approval was required from the three school districts, I would have submitted the site approval documentation to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of my institution to obtain approval to proceed and begin collecting the data needed for my research. After receiving IRB approval from my institution, I piloted a study using the questions that would be used in the data collection methods from the participant journal data collection method (See Appendix H), semi-structured interviews data collection method (See Appendix D), and the focus data collection method (See Appendix E). I used the pilot study to perfect my interview skills and to evaluate the questions to ascertain if the data collected using these methods would provide the necessary information for my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

While awaiting all other needed site approvals, if applicable, I identified educators from the identified participating school districts located in Central Virginia who have experience with the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Identification of the educators began with identifying those educators who met the criteria of being licensed to teach in the State of Virginia and who are

endorsed in one of the following areas: Library/Media, Reading, English, or Administration and Supervision. Educators participating in the study were also identified as those with less than five and more than 10 years of experience with the phenomenon being researched.

Other Participant Protections

When recruiting and sharing information about the study with participants, each participant was provided with a consent form to participate in the study. Also, participants were informed of the confidentiality of the site and the use of pseudonyms to protect their identity and the site's identity. Participants were informed that all data from the individual and focus group transcribed interviews and audio recordings will be stored on the researcher's flash drive and not on the researcher's personal computer device. And that reflective journals created by the participants will be securely stored and locked in a drawer where only the researcher has access.

Minimal risks exist for this study. Participants were advised of the risk that others could potentially share information learned in the focus group setting. The probability of sharing information outside the group was disclosed to each participant; however minimal. Benefits to the participants were discussed and how the information will be used for future studies, if applicable.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological transcendental study was to discover how educators view the use of school libraries and educational technology's contribution to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). Conley (2007) research outlined that K12 learners entering college are unprepared because the rigor is missing in K12 learning environments that learners need to prepare them for college or real-world experiences. Accordingly, Wade et al. (2020); Schrum

and Sumerfield (2018) research posed that learning in the 21st century requires learners to be fluent with information and technology and possess the ability to use a wide range of information resources as tools to achieve academic success. Chapter Three outlined how recognizing the phoneme of the experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology can be beneficial or not to the success of learners in K8 learning environments. The use of the methods outlined to collect and analyze the data provides opportunities for future studies on the how the impact of school libraries and educational technology, along with the integration of HPT as resources can positively improve the literacy skills of K8 learners in learning environments.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and the use of educational technology contribute to the development of literacy of learners in K12 learning environments. Chapter Four provides an in-depth understanding of the experiences of educators who lead literacy initiatives in Central Virginia schools. The experiences of the participants offered an informed perspective on their ability to integrate these resources when providing literacy instruction. The key findings presented in Chapter Four were derived from in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant journals, and a focus group all of which were analyzed to address the following central and sub-research questions:

Participants

The study included 12 participants who serve as school literacy leaders in three public school districts located in Central Virginia. The school literacy leader participants in the study consisted of 11 females and one male. Five of the participants identify as Caucasian, one as Latino, and five as African American. At the time of the study, the participants held the following school literacy leader positions: assistant principals, reading specialists, and library/media specialists. Three participants have an endorsement in K12 administration and supervision and two have obtained the highest academic terminal degree in education. The years of experience of the participants in their respective roles as school literacy leaders range from one to 24 years. Although each participant may have served in their respective roles for this study for less than 10 years, each participant has a background in teaching and has been in education performing various roles for longer than 10 years.

Table 2 lists each participant, the number of years in their current role, the number of years in education, the highest academic degree earned, the content area, and the grade level.

Table 2.

School Educator Participant List

School Educator	Years in Current Role	Years in Education	Highest Degree	Content Area	Grade Level
Alessandria	19	24	Bachelors	Library/Media	K5
Ameliagrace	2	24	Doctorate	Educational Leadership/Special Education	K5
Bernadette	4	22	Masters	Educational Leadership	6-8
Carmen	3	8	Masters	Reading Specialist Ed Technology Integrator	K5
Damien	8	17	Masters	Library/Media	K5
Debbie	3	10	Masters	Library/Media	K5
Elise	4	16	Masters	Library/Media	6-8
Helen	7	18	Masters	ELA	6-8
Jessica	5	12	Masters	Library/Media	K5
Martha	1	11	Bachelors	Reading Specialist	K5
Melinda	2	8	Doctorate	Educational Leadership/ELA	6-8
Scarlett	3	28	Masters	Reading Specialist	K5

Alessandria

Alessandria has been in education for 24 years in an urban setting in Central Virginia and believes that all learners can learn. Although she graduated college with a degree in education, she wanted to own her own business. As such, Alessandria decided to open her own cleaning business and for many years she was content. When the need for the services she provided

started to decline, she realized that she needed a career that would provide her with stable

employment and some financial security for the future which led her to seek career counseling.

With the aid of a career counselor, Alessandria realized that to achieve her long-term goals of

stable employment and financial security she was supposed to be using the degree she earned in

education which led her to begin a career as a second-grade teacher.

During her early years of teaching, her passion for literacy began to resurface as she

recalled how as a young child there were lots of books in her home. Although she did not

remember being read to as a child, she recalled developing a love for reading in her youth, and

becoming a Library/Media Specialist was a path that would expose her students to the different

genres of literature that would open their minds to the endless possibilities that can be found in a

book. In her current role as a Library/Media Specialist, although she does contribute to

supporting literacy programs and activities in her building, Alessandria is not a member of the

administrative team that promotes literacy in her building.

Ameliagrace

Ameliagrace began her career in broadcasting after graduating from college. She deviated

from broadcasting into education because she had small children and wanted to have hours that

enabled her to be home with her children. She began substituting in a rural K5 elementary school

in Central Virginia where almost all her assignments involved the area of special education.

During a substitute teaching assignment, the building principal encouraged her to become a

Special Education teacher.

Ameliagrace is in her second year as a K2 assistant principal and the coordinator of

special education in a rural PreK-5 elementary school in Central Virginia and has been education

for 24 years. She describes her primary role as dealing with the behavioral concerns of all

students and ensuring that the school she serves complies with IEPs and 504s, in addition to serving as the local educational agency (LEA). As the LEA, she makes the final decision if a team cannot reach a consensus, reviews the progress notes, conducts observations, and helps staff improve in areas such as data collection to ensure that students receive services. Her dedication to helping all learners learn is guided by the value she places on literacy as a means to help students progress and to provide students with inclusive activities where they can succeed with their peers that utilize the school library and educational technology as resources to ensure student success.

Ameliagrace recalls developing a love of reading from her youth. She articulated that as a child her mother instilled in her the love of reading by reading aloud to her and as she got older, Ameliagrace began reading encyclopedias and thesauruses on her own. Ameliagrace believes that all children can learn when provided differentiated instruction that is inclusive of all available resources, including but not limited to the use of the school library and educational technology. She shares her vision of literacy and inclusion with staff during their weekly planning meetings. According to Ameliagrace, the concept of literacy can be manifested in many different ways in learning environments, and is why she makes it her mission to model and provide support in the classrooms of the teaching staff within her purvue.

Bernadette

Bernadette's chosen career path was not to become a teacher, as she initially worked with families in the Head Start program in a rural school district in Central Virginia. Bernadette has 12 years of experience in education at the middle school level, grades 6-8 and has served as an assistant principal for the past four years. Before becoming a leader in the district, her role as an Intervention Specialist involved working with the families of middle school students to combat

chronic absenteeism through family and community engagement programs and initiatives. Growing up, Bernadette does not recall having books in her home or being read to, but she does note that she attended a Head Start program when she was three years old. Although her exposure to literacy was not a part of her everyday home life, Bernadette acknowledges that attending preschool at an early age provided her with a jump start on acquiring literacy skills.

Bernadette describes her experiences leading literacy initiatives in her building that are inclusive of school libraries and educational technology as limited in part due to the inexperience of the current library/media specialist in her building. However, she expressed that before the current library/media specialist, those who previously were in that role were active members of the literacy teams and committees. Active members of the literacy teams and committees who were instrumental in participating in the development of activities and literacy initiatives regularly throughout the school year.

Carmen

Carmen began her career in education eight years ago as an instructional assistant. Her previous role in education was as a third-grade teacher, and she has currently served K5 students as an educational technology integrator for the last three years in an urban school district in Central Virginia. During her teaching career and as she transitioned into the role of an EdTech Integrator, she was able to obtain a master's degree in Reading which afforded her the ability to become endorsed as a Reading Specialist in her district. Carmen acknowledges that growing up her home life was unstable, however, she had teachers who motivated her, and going to school became a motivating factor for her to further her education to become a teacher.

As such, she recollects that although her home life was unstable there were books in her home and that her mom loved to read romance novels, but she did not recall being read to as a

child. However, she noted that she was an early reader and contributed the love she developed for reading to the teachers in her youth who impacted her life as well as the introduction of computers to societies. The introduction of computers during her youth provided more opportunities for her to perfect the development of her literacy skills because it allowed her to explore the world through a digital len.

Damien

Damien pursued his master's degree in Library Science and was formerly a law librarian. Due to family concerns, he relocated to Central Virginia and began his career in education 17 years ago and has currently been in the role of a K5 Library/Media Specialist in an urban school district for eight years. Damien held various roles in public library settings and has worked in both suburban and urban communities to develop literacy programs that provide families with ways to navigate the social and economic paths that exist in society. He described his motivation for promoting literacy as an inherited duty of a Library/Media Specialist.

Damien realizes how important it is to expose his students to the world, and different cultures. He strives to ensure that everyone in his building, from the custodial staff, cafeteria staff, all teachers, and school leaders are familiar with the best practices and current trends and are active participants in promoting literacy every day for students. Based on his experiences as a Law Librarian and working with the public in public libraries, Damien feels confident in collaborating with teachers and school leaders to help reinforce instructional strategies on literacy in the school library that have been taught in the classroom. Based on his responses, Damien is a caring person who is in it for the right reason and who advocates for students by ensuring they have the appropriate access to achieve success.

Debbie

Debbie has worked in an urban school district for 10 years. She currently has been a Library/Media Specialist for the last three years after coming out of the classroom as a fourth-grade teacher general education teacher for seven years. She takes great pride in her contributions to the development of literacy skills in her students since the majority of her time teaching was spent teaching special education classes. Debbie attributes the successes she experienced in increasing the literacy skills of her students were a result of the collaborative opportunities she experienced with other special education teachers. Collaboration that involved ways to include school libraries and educational technology into lesson planning to ensure that literacy was at the forefront and that students were encouraged to become engaged in their own learning. The collaborative efforts that existed, provided a means to document improvements in the literacy scores of all general education and special education students when they were tested.

Because of her successes, Debbie's transition from classroom teacher to Media/Specialist has been filled with meaningful ways to demonstrate how collaboration with others can lead to successful student academic outcomes. Debbie considers that because of her flexibility, her willingness to adapt to the frequent changes in expectations for her role as a Library/Media specialist, and the successes she experienced while teaching fourth grade to document the strategies and provide data to support the growth that her students achieved are reasons that she is considered one of the literacy leaders in her building.

Elise

Elise has been in education for 16 years. Before becoming a Library/Media Specialist, she taught seventh-grade English in middle school for eight years in a suburban district in Central Virginia. When she began her ninth year of teaching, she taught eighth-grade English,

where reading and writing literacy skills were a significant aspect of the curriculum. While teaching eighth-grade English, Elise began to become more involved and engaged in actively promoting literacy among her students and in her building. She serves as a member of the leadership team in her school building and is viewed as a literacy expert.

Elise collaborates during planning periods with the classroom teachers, reading coaches, and Instructional Technology Resource Teachers in her building. She is an active participant in developing and designing professional development to assist new teachers with techniques to create opportunities to integrate school libraries and educational technology into their learning environments to promote literacy that keeps students engaged and motivated to learn. In her youth, Elise recalls the numerous books in her home from an early age and how reading became enjoyable. Enjoyable in part because as a means to encourage reading, her parents provided incentives for becoming a good reader. As such, Elise uses incentives to motivate her students, as well as her colleagues, to develop transferrable literacy skills.

Helen

Helen has taught in various school districts during her 18 years in education. She currently has been teaching English for seven years in a rural school district in Central Virginia. During her career as a teacher, Helen has taught elementary and middle school students; however, she shared that teaching English to middle schoolers reminds her of the value placed on literacy in her home when she was in her youth. Helen shared that becoming a teacher was important to her after she made several visits to the school that her children attended. During her visits, Helen noted how impressed she was with the way the classroom teacher managed the class

and how it was obvious that the teacher genuinely cared for the students which was evident in the learning that was taking place in the classroom.

Helen, who appears to be passionate about children and education, contributes her motivation and dedication to ensuring that all her students succeed stems from the encouragement she received from her grandmother. According to Helen, her grandmother who lived in another state, would send suitcases of books to her to encourage her to read and write contibuted to her developing a love of reading, which she strives to share with her students. She mentioned that the integration of school libraries and educational technology is not discussed or included as resources to promote literacy in her building, due to a lack of focus on literacy from the building leaders, as well as the lack of a certified and qualified school library/media specialist. She thinks one of the most important things that school leaders can do to ensure that students become literate adults is to encourage collaboration across all content areas with the school library.

Jessica

Jessica has been in education for 12 years and has been a Library/Media Specialist for five years in a suburban school district in Central Virginia. Jessica is a career switcher who previously worked for the government. Jessica is currently the assistant principal in a K5 school district in an urban setting. In her current role, she is a member of the school leadership team and serves on several committees, one of which is literacy-focused. She is responsible for helping to create the master schedule for the building and always considers how school libraries can be an asset to closing the literacy gap for all students in the K5 classrooms in her building.

On the many committees she serves, Jessica daily reflects on how instruction is provided to students is shares through open dialogue with her colleagues thoughts and ways to improve

the performance of all the students in her building. Jessica has found that a balance of leaders who have a focus on literacy and educators who support literacy go a long way to aid in the decision-making process when a culture of literacy is everyone's focus. Jessica believes that the role school libraries have in moving the academic needle of students is as important as the role of the classroom teacher.

Martha

Martha has worked in a rural classroom setting in Central Virginia for 11 years teaching Language Arts and received her Reading Specialist endorsement about a year ago at the time of this study. As a Language Arts teacher, her motivation to get her reading endorsement was due in large part to her desire to follow in her mother's footsteps. Martha's mother was an educator whom she admired because she saw firsthand the wonderful and inspiring ways her mother impacted her students when she was growing up.

In addition to her mother, Martha acknowledged that she had a few teachers who instilled in her a love of literacy which exposed her to a world beyond her environment. Many forms of reading material, newspapers, books, and magazines were plentiful in her home where she was encouraged to read and she frequently visited the school library in her youth to complete classroom research projects. Martha enjoyed visiting the school library, as well as the public library where she enjoyed being read to and participating in the summer learning activities and reading challenges that were offered in both her school library and the public library.

The impact her mother had on her life fueled her passion to become an educator. She has always been inspired to be an educator and while pursuing her reading endorsement, her passion to ensure her students become literate was a light blub moment. Because she spent quite a bit of time in the academic library to complete assignments to obtain her endorsement, Martha realized

how school libraries have a huge task to inspire students to develop a love for reading. According to Martha, school libraries are the perfect resources to fill in the blanks that may exist for students who may experience challenges in grasping concepts being learned in the classroom.

Melinda

Melinda is currently the assistant principal of a middle school in a rural school district in Central Virginia and received her EdD about two years ago. Before becoming an assistant principal, Melinda was a seventh-grade ELA teacher. Having been an assistant principal for only one school year, she is working to develop her leadership style and approach after she transitioned into the role of an administrator from the classroom. However, she has strong values and beliefs about creating a literacy culture in her building.

In her current role, she is responsible for helping to create the master schedule for the building and always considers how literacy concepts and skills can be incorporated into daily learning for the students in her building. As an instructional leader for History and English in her building, she strives to develop ways to support literacy instruction for all students, even those with disabilities. In her role, she expresses her vision to promote literacy to her colleagues which includes suggesting ways to integrate the use of the school library and educational technology when developing weekly lessons. She supports the use of these resources as a means to document and record student data to improve student performance.

Melinda considers herself a reflective leader and is open to having a dialogue with her colleagues to increase student performance. She finds that in her new role, collaboration with educators with expertise in various roles and subjects is beneficial as she makes decisions that can impact the literacy skills of all students in her building making for a good supportive leadership team. As she continues to develop and perfect her leadership skills, she daily reflects

by using a journal to write down the tasks, failures, and successes experienced. Although her duties as an administrator vary daily, she finds time to spend supporting teachers in the classroom, specifically working with students on literacy tasks, especially vocabulary.

Scarlett

Scarlett has been an educator for 28 years. She began her career as a Title One reading tutor in a rural school district in Central Virginia. She received her Reading Specialist endorsement and has been in her current role as a Reading Specialist for three years. Scarlett has always had a love for teaching and literacy. She attended Community College after graduating high school for one semester and made the switch to pursue a degree in teaching.

She describes her road to teaching as a path that was impacted by an ample number of books in her home that were read to her by her mom and dad regularly. Scarlett recalled her experiences with school libraries and public libraries as impactful moments in her youthful life that shaped her views and beliefs about literacy. She described her first couple of years of being a Title One reading tutor as a time when she was becoming familiar with the curriculum and trying to fit her experiences with decoding with what she thought students needed to learn.

Scarlett plays an active role in leading literacy in her building. She develops Title One programs for the students, their families, and the community that are literacy-driven. Scarlett believes that communicating with the subject-matter experts in her building, which includes the school library, intentionally can be a way to change the thought processes of educators about how valuable these resources if integrated into learning environments can be extremely helpful to close the literacy gaps that exist in schools today by providing students with access to content that they can relate to. Scarlett has high expectations for not just her students, but all students in

her building, and strives to ensure that all students will have access to challenging age-appropriate grade-level content.

Results

The findings of this study were derived from the individual in-depth semi-structured interviews, reflections notated from the participants' journals, and the focus group interview responses. A total of 12 educators participated in this study, seven of whom participated in the focus group. The modified Van Kaam analysis (Moustakas, 1994) was used to ensure that the experiences and the voices of each participant remained authentic throughout the data analysis process. Ensuring authenticity led to revealing the commonalities and any differences in their experiences with school libraries and educational technology from their youth into their professional lives as educators. QDA Miner Lite was used to code and organize the interviews, participant journals, and the focus group session to achieve horizontalization, reduction and elimination, clustering and thematizing, validation, individual textural description, individual structural description, and textural-structural description.

To ensure the lived experiences and voices of the study participants were captured accurately and authentically and to avoid my biases, I practiced epoché by using a reflective journal (Appendix I) after the collection of data from each participant interview and after the focus group. The data analysis process relied heavily on listening to the experiences of the participants to validate themes until saturation was evident among the participants. The interviews formed a collective description of the experiences of school literacy leaders when leading initiatives to integrate school libraries and educational technology into K12 learning environments. Participant interviews, journals of their daily experiences, and the focus group data reveal themes among the participants related to the research question and sub-questions.

Table 3 is a representation of the themes and the sub-theme that emerged during this study. Once the triangulation of data from the semi-structured interviews, participant journals, and the focus group occurred, several themes emerged. Triangulation provided an in-depth understanding of the literacy experiences of the participants to reveal major themes (Patton, 1999). During the coding process, triangulating phrases, participant quotes, and the use of keywords among participants enabled the ability to recognize and validate consistencies among the participants whereby themes began to emerge. As a result of the coding and validation processes, four themes and one sub-theme emerged. Table 3 explains the overall theme development, and an explanation for each theme is provided.

Table 3

Themes & Subthemes

Open codes	Themes
resources to expand literacy opportunities within the school and the community to meet the needs of students responsible for implementing/leading literacy initiatives "I would have liked more opportunities to collaborate with school libraries." "I wish I had more time to integrate school libraries and technology into my classroom instruction." "It would have been beneficial if in my teacher preparation classes there had been a class devoted to how to use the library." "The use of technology is not always the answer."	Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities Sub-theme: *Educators Identify Gaps in Knowledge*
Open codes	Themes
"Oftentimes I've used a flip grid to record myself providing instruction." "I have to do a lot of self-reflection because nobody else in the building does our job and we don't have a team." "I seek feedback on what I could do better."	Leading Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Awareness
Open codes	Themes
students take control of their learning outcomes "Students switch from learning to read to reading to learn." "Techniques vary depending on the student and their need." "More discussion by teachers with school libraries about topics in the classroom." "Sometimes it takes a couple of years before people trust you." "It would be beautiful to bring everyone together on the same page to enhance student learning and engagement."	Leading Literacy with Collaboration
Open codes	Themes
"Libraries are viewed as just a place for students to go for a short period with no purpose." "We're like the break/planning period for teachers." "I think we have lost the purpose of our school library." "I'm going to focus my attention on the people who want to collaborate with me."	Changing the Mindset of Educators to Develop a Culture of Literacy

Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities

The first major theme, Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities, emerged from the semi-structured interviews, participants' journals, and the focus group. Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) activity theory explains how the activities of those who engage in dialogue to understand different perspectives contribute to fostering a culture of collaboration. As a group and individually, participants shared that opportunities to create time and space to engage school libraries and educational technology in their instruction are more often than not non-existent in their buildings.

Because there is no time and space created for school libraries to collaborate with classroom teachers during the school day, the participants acknowledge that they do not recognize the value of integrating school libraries and educational technology as resources to improve the academic performance of students. Although the majority of the participants in this study had books in their homes as youth, visited the school libraries regularly, and each found pleasure in reading, collectively they agreed that to create a culture of literacy in schools, teacher preparation courses should be revisited to ensure that educators learn to intentionally provide opportunities to create time and space for collaboration with subject matter experts during the school day. Bernadette stated, "It would have been beneficial if in the coursework she took to prepare to become a teacher it had a focus on literacy strategies and included a class devoted to how to use the library" (personal communication, 2024).

She explains "To continue to grow to meet the needs of my students, I seek opportunities to broaden my knowledge to learn different strategies that can improve the literacy skills to positively impact the students in my building" (personal communication, 2024). She further notes that what motivates her to seek new knowledge is to become the guide for her "Students to

switch from learning to read to reading to learn, by providing them with all the available tools and resources that I can design to ensure they are successful" (personal communication, 2024)

Sub-Theme 1 - Educators Identify Gaps in Knowledge

The sub-theme Educators Identify Gaps in Knowledge emerged from the major theme Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities. As the educators who lead literacy in their buildings completed their roles and responsibilities, they recognized gaps in their knowledge that motivated them to seek opportunities to acquire skills and ways to incorporate the use of school libraries and educational technology to engage students. As Helen stated, "I wish I had more time to integrate school libraries and educational technology into my classroom instruction" (personal communication, 2023). The responses of the participants indicated that there is a need for coursework when preparing to become teachers which will result in producing school leaders who create a culture within their buildings where the focus in all subjects taught is on literacy.

All of the participants expressed the need for more time and space to be created to enable them to develop and prepare ways to incorporate school libraries and educational technology as resources when providing literacy instruction to their students as what is missing before they become teachers. The problem is that academic programs do not provide opportunities for those preparing to become teachers with the skills and knowledge to be exposed to all that libraries and educational technology can offer to supplement the gaps in knowledge that exist in students.

Creating Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Analysis

The next major theme that emerged from the data collected in this study was Creating Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Awareness. The data collected in this study robustly suggested that self-reflection was of the utmost importance for all the participants. Their responses strongly

indicated that to ensure that they were providing relevant information of substance to their students the ability to look within themselves was pivotal to the success of their students, as Alessandria stated, "I have to do a lot of self-reflection because nobody else in the building does our job and we don't have a team" (personal communication, 2024).

Melinda shared during the focus group that "Oftentimes I've used a flip grid to record myself providing instruction" (personal communication, 2024) when she was a classroom teacher. When reflecting on the instruction she provided, she realized that the recordings provided her with the ability to instantly recognize if her delivery of the instruction was received well or if it needed to be modified to ensure all her students followed along. Using this mode of technology as a way to self-reflect, she believes is advantageous to ensuring the success of all the students in her classroom.

Leading Literacy with Collaboration

According to Burns (1978); Merga (2020); Srirahayu et al., (2021), when leaders and others work together a transformation occurs. The responses from the study's participants indicated that they were open and would welcome the opportunity to be present educators are discussing and planning literacy programs and activities for students. The participants shared how there is value in the knowledge and expertise of school libraries that can drive instructional activities.

The analysis of the data revealed that all of the participants acknowledge that school libraries and educational technology can be instrumental to the academic success of students. However, the vast majority of the participants emphasized how the lack of time and space does not offer the ability to collaborate with others to support literacy instruction, which adds limits to the knowledge of those making literacy decisions, during the decision-making process.

Ameliagrace noted the "Importance of bringing different perspectives, viewpoints, and opinions of others into the conversations can make the decision-making process much easier" (personal communication, 2023). As such, she shared that as an administrator when she reflects on her daily ability to collaborate with other educators in her building, she realizes that "It is challenging to include the school library, as well as others in conversations when time and space to collaborate is inconsistent or nonexistent during the school day" (personal communication, 2023).

Changing the Mindset of Educators to Develop a Culture of Literacy

It has been well-documented that school libraries can successfully impact the academic success of students when included in conversations. The impact of school libraries can be seen in higher literacy scores, which leads to higher graduation rates and improved writing scores (Coker, 2015; Gaver, 1963; Krashen et al., 2012; Lance & Hofschire, 2012; Todd et al., 2010). The role of school libraries in their contribution to increasing literacy is multifaceted. School libraries that are staffed with certified librarians can provide a mirage of information to support all educators and content specialists in their building (AASL, 2013; Merga, 2020).

However, facilitating a change in the mindset of educators about the role school libraries and educational technology have in impacting literacy in students begins at the top (Andrews, 2020; Arredondo, 2021). The author's research explained that responsibilities and roles are assigned by the building principal based on the vision for the school. When literacy is not the focus of the leaders, it is difficult to get staff to intentionally find ways and time to collaborate with others who impact student literacy learning. Melinda shared that as she continues to develop her leadership style as a new assistant principal, she stated, "As the instructional leader, an expectation and vision for literacy must be shared and communicated throughout the building as

a nonnegotiable to show staff that I embrace inclusion and collaboration" (personal communication, 2024).

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Research Question Responses

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Central Research Question

How do educators describe their professional experiences with school libraries and educational technology? The consensus among the participants in this study is that school libraries and educational technology are not valued as literacy-focused assets and resources in their school buildings. According to Helen, "I wish I had more time to integrate school libraries and educational technology into my classroom instruction" (personal communication, 2023). As such Damien shared that, "Libraries are viewed as just a place for students to go for a short period with no purpose" (personal communication, 2024).

Sub-Question One

How do the early childhood experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology impact the way literacy instruction is provided to learners in their professional lives? Carmen shared that because of her early childhood experiences with school libraries and technology, her main objective is to ensure that differentiating the instruction she provides is her focus and shared, "Techniques vary depending on the student and their need" (personal communication, 2024). However, because of her exposure to school libraries and educational technology during her youth, Debbie gets excited when her students "Switch from learning to read to reading to learn" (personal communication, 2024).

Sub-Question Two

How do educators as instructional leaders describe their experiences using school libraries and educational technology as resources when developing literacy instruction in K12

learning environments? Jessica pointed out that integrating school libraries and educational technology into the lessons she delivers to her students, "Is especially helpful for kids with disabilities because they like it when books are read to them and the use of technology helps them to be able to follow along" (personal communication, 2024). However, Martha expressed that "Although she loves the aspect of technology and there are great tools out there to help struggling students, society has become way too dependent on the use of technology for learning" (personal communication, 2024).

Sub-Question Three

How do educators describe their critical self-reflection experiences when making informed decisions to create and provide literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology? The participants in this study strive to include school libraries and educational technology in the planning of instructions and Bernadette shared that "It would have been beneficial if in my teacher preparation classes there had been a class devoted to how to use the library" (personal communication, 2024). Damien expressed that when he thinks about making decisions for what will work best for his students in the school library, "We do not have someone to bounce ideas off of and because of that we are sometimes an afterthought when literacy activities are planned for students" (personal communication, 2024).

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Summary

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Libraries more often than not are the connection communities have to resources that provide exposure to developing an understanding of the world or society in which we live (Shaghaghi & Hosseini, 2023). The four themes and the sub-theme, Educators Identify Gaps in Knowledge, that emerged from the data collected in this study are identified as Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities, Leading Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Awareness,

Leading Literacy with Collaboration, and Changing the Mindset of Educators to Develop a Culture of Literacy were derived from individual participant interviews, participant journaling, and a focus group. The findings from the data collected in this study demonstrate there is a need for educators to understand the role that libraries, whether school or public, contribute to society to ensure that students have access to information skills that will enable them to face the world and its challenges.

Regardless if the library is a rural, urban, or suburban institution, its impact contributes to the literacy skills of students. The use of these institutions goes a long way as resources that aid in reducing gaps in knowledge that exist in students and the societies we live in today. For this reason, educators who lead literacy in schools must be provided with access to knowledge early in their preparation to teach to foster an attitude to create a culture of being literacy-focused.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenology is to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries and educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Wade et al., 2020). As the use of technology has contributed to broadening the scope of how and when learners learn (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Schrum & Sumerfield, 2018), school libraries have a critical role in supporting the development of literacy skills in learners. This chapter provides a summary of the thematic findings and a robust discussion of the findings from the data collected from the researcher's perspective. The chapter will continue by examining implications for policy and practice, and the empirical and theoretical implications of the study. Chapter 5 will discuss the limitations and delimitations applicable to the study and it will conclude with future

research recommendations.

Discussion

Education is designed to prepare students to become contributing members of society. However, as Reed and Oslund (2018) research explains, there continues to be ambiguity surrounding the role of school libraries in K12 learning environments. The continued ambiguity of the role, as the research found, hindered the abilities of educators to create a culture of literacy in their buildings that offer opportunities to create time and space to collaborate. Educators who encourage the creation of time and space by providing opportunities to embrace collaboration and inclusivity for the development and creation of learning spaces with a focus on literacy (Lomos, et al., 2011) can increase literacy among learners today. By embracing all the available tools and resources to ensure student success in life, utilizing these school libraries and educational technology provides opportunities to embrace collaboration and inclusivity in learning environments where students are motivated, engaged, and even owners of their learning (Srirahayu et al., 2021).

To accomplish this, the data collected indicates that educators should begin to embrace the wealth of knowledge and skills that can be found in school libraries, particularly at the elementary level. However, to embrace the wealth of knowledge and skills found in school libraries, educators must first let go of what libraries used to be and start to embrace the collaborative and integrative role of school libraries and educational technology in society today. Educators must begin to acknowledge school libraries as places where trained certified literacy experts can support all subjects and content areas as a valuable tool to overcome the literacy deficits that students are experiencing. If the mindset of educators about school libraries and their contributions to literacy are going to change, it must start with school leaders in the Central

Office who see the value in school libraries' contributions to the development of literacy skills to close the literacy gap that exists in students today.

To recognize how these resources positively impact student learning, educators, particularly those who lead from the top, must model a vision that is focused on literacy and demonstrate a commitment to improving literacy among our youth of today. The theoretical frameworks guiding this study is Vygotsky and Lenot'ev's (1978) theory of activity and Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning. The findings of this study are grounded in each theory and supported by the literature identified in Chapter 2.

The central research question was used to explore the lived experiences of educators who lead literacy initiatives to close the literacy gap followed by three sub-questions: (a) How do the early childhood experiences of educators with school libraries and technology impact the way they provide literacy instruction to learners in their professional lives? (b) How do educators as instructional leaders describe their experiences using school libraries and educational technology as resources when developing literacy instruction in K12 learning environments? (c) How do school leaders describe their critical self-reflection experiences to create and provide literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology?

The participants described their experiences leading literacy instruction and revealed how their early experiences impacted whether they integrated school libraries and educational technology as literacy resources, collaboration efforts, and the need for time and space (Major Theme 1). Several educators pointed to the major theme of Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities as a key contributor to understanding the value placed on the use of school libraries and educational technology as resources to support classroom teachers (Major Theme 3). During the process of reflection (Major Theme 2) the participants expressed their

concerns about the inabilities they experience to collaborate (Major Theme 3) mainly due to the need to change the mindset of educators regarding the value school libraries and educational technology add to increasing the literacy skills in students today (Major Theme 4). As a result, themes began to appear that addressed the central research and sub-questions.

The first sub-question was addressed in that all 12 of the study participants found that based on their lived experiences with libraries and educational technology during their youth demonstrated their depth of understanding of the value these resources can impact the literacy skills of students and the importance of creating a culture of literacy in learning environments they believe can be monumental to ensuring students success (Major Themes 3 & 4). Each participant shared how they value the ability to collaborate with others when preparing literacy instruction for students. Yet due to the lack of time and space to build relationships, as well as being afforded learning opportunities that focus on providing literacy instruction continues to be a hindrance still today in the field of education (Major Theme 1, Sub-theme 1). The experience of collaborating with increased learning opportunities, through coursework and professional development with a focus on literacy to include strategies according to the participants, is a way to stay current on trends and resources that have been developed to help educators lead effective literacy initiatives that are related to the real world.

Sub-question 2 addressed how participants described their experiences leading literacy in their buildings to include school libraries and educational technology in their professional lives. The 12 participants found their experiences in their youth with libraries, along with any previous experiences integrating school libraries and educational technology into learning environments was not enough. Each of the participants recognized during the study that to ensure the literacy instruction being provided was adequate and measurable for all students (Major Theme 1)

challenges surfaced. Those challenges were related to the need of the educator to acquire new knowledge to remain current and up-to-date on trends, strategies, and resources that directly impact the improvement in literacy skills of their students (Major Theme 1). The educators in this study consistently highlighted their difficulties in developing and participating in collaborative efforts as a means to gain new knowledge as significantly impacting their ability to have a direct impact on closing the gaps in literacy that exist in their students.

Sub-question 3 addresses how educators describe their critical self-reflection experiences to create and provide literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology. Understanding and recognizing a need to change the mindset of those who are in charge of leading literacy directly impacts how educators self-reflect on their approach to designing and implementing literacy initiatives in their buildings (Major Theme 2). Educators shared how self-reflection drives their decisions about literacy and how to express the value of seeking the inclusion of school libraries and educational technology to the instructional leaders in their buildings (Major Theme 4) can enhance the development of a culture of literacy. Educators in this study shared that establishing a culture that is literacy-focused in their buildings will help to change the mindset of educators for the role school libraries and educational technology play in literacy for students in K12 learning environments to aid in the improvement of student outcomes.

Summary of Thematic Findings

The following four major themes and one sub-theme emerged and were interpreted as a result of this study: Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities, Leading Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Awareness, and Changing the Mindset of Educators to Develop a Culture of Literacy.

Create Time and Space for Development Opportunities. Each of the 12 participants expressed in their interviews and the journals they provided that there was little to no time during the school day to learn something new or meet with team members or other staff in their building, which aided in developing the sub-theme Educators Identify Gaps in Knowledge. Each of the participants expressed that during the school day, they are either consumed with managing student behaviors or teacher opposition to opportunities to share experiences, being on hall duty, etc., according to the middle school participants in this study. Scarlett, an elementary reading specialist shared also that, "Unfortunately, I do not find much time in my schedule to meet with others except during planning meetings."

Notably, regardless of participants' years of experience, previous or current role in leading literacy, whether they serve elementary or middle school students, they all expressed concern with not having time or space in their buildings to explore new opportunities and learn new ways to improve or deliver instruction to students. Elise, who has been a Library/Media Specialist for four years echoed this as a concern for her while she was a classroom teacher and stated "Nothing has changed, it seems to continue to get worse." As Cox (2018) noted in his research, educators who establish and model their literacy vision for their school that is structured to afford time and space for collaborative work is the mark of a responsible leader.

The concept of teaching literacy requires a team effort. Everyone involved in the discussion brings new, different, and even unique perspectives to move the academic needle for students. Damien strongly pointed out when reflecting, "I think we have lost the purpose of our school library". Debbie concurred as she expressed, "We are like the break/planning period for teachers."

Creating Literacy Initiatives Based on Self-Analysis. School literacy leaders demonstrate leadership characteristics reflective of who they are as individuals (Kouses & Posner, 2012). The participants in the study indicated that to be authentic in their quest to improve literacy among their students, their ability to self-reflect and be critical of themselves affords them the ability to continuously improve their ability to lead to gaining the trust of collaborative partners. Bernadette described herself as a "transformational leader." In her reflective practices, she shares how she considers her approach when suggesting to staff ways to combat literacy in her building to reach a common goal; in turn, she seeks their input to gain insight on the best way to achieve successful outcomes. All the participants commented on the significance of a team effort as necessary to build trust and solidify relationships. According to Cetin and Kinkin (2015), transformational leaders inspire, motivate, and provide intellectual stimulation, as well as individual consideration.

Critical self-reflection affords the ability to grow. Being able to identify one's strengths and weaknesses is a way to evaluate when support is needed. Bandura's (1977) theoretical framework supports the process of reflection and action. Elise stated, "I seek feedback on what I could do better." Each of the participants explained their need to seek feedback to assist when deciding how and what activities or programs are needed to tackle literacy in their buildings.

Leading Literacy with Collaboration. The 12 participants in this study shared the importance of communication and collaboration with building staff, other schools, central office, especially the central office as the participants expressed over and over again, to establish a culture of literacy across school districts begins at the top. Each indicated that having opportunities to share thoughts and ideas leads to making informed decisions that impact a student's trajectory was a priority for participants. Before making decisions that affect student

achievement and growth, the participant educators seek information to develop a fresh

perspective. Melinda, an elementary assistant principal, referred to this form of collaboration as

"Having someone that looks at all aspects of a given task to accomplish it from beginning to

end." Establishing collaborative relationships is crucial since many educators have not

experienced any formal literacy training (Bateman et al., 2017; Eutsler, 2022; Srirahayu et al.,

2021).

The participants in the study shared how, in addition to using their colleagues as support

for decision-making, they also create collaborative partnerships with colleagues at other schools

to garner ideas that promote literacy. Damien advised, "Include everyone; you want as many

people involved in your building as you can." Additionally, he shared that when everyone is

included in the decision-making process safe spaces are created that promote and encourage

individual growth, he stated "I had an opportunity last week to collaborate with the ELA teacher

in our building. It went well because everyone felt comfortable to share and discuss their ideas."

Changing the Mindset of Educators to Develop a Culture of Literacy. Change is

challenging for most people and the "we have always done it this way" is a classic metaphor

found and used in education, as well as many organizations that are resistant to change that still

exists today. Bolman and Deal (2017) shared that these types of attitudes are used in many ways

as an "escape from the tyranny of facts and logic" (p. 263) in the culture of an institution that

shape its identity and character. To change the way educators view the value of school libraries

and embrace them as collaborative literacy partners will take a leader who is confident in their

abilities and possesses the willingness to challenge existing processes to reverse the entropy that currently exists.

Instructional leaders who authentically exhibit compassion and understanding of what was and how things used to be can create a culture in schools that builds cohesiveness and changes the mindset of others. The process of changing mindsets is challenging but can be accomplished with intentionality that requires an investment of time, patience, and true collaboration that will result in success for the students being educated (Arredondo, 2021). All of the participants in this study understood and supported the inclusion of school libraries and educational technology in conversations as resources to combat literacy. The participants acknowledged that during their participation in this study, they found themselves being intentional about finding time to approach discussions with the Media/Specialist in their building that were literacy-centered. Elise shared that to have an impactful discussion when it comes to literacy a person must be "knowledgeable" about the different trends and resources available to earn the trust of teachers when sharing new techniques that add value to their instruction.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Implications for policy and practice were based on the careful analysis of participant's data collected in this study. The findings revealed that previous and current experiences of the educators in their respective roles leading literacy weigh heavily when it comes to establishing a culture and climate that is literacy-focused within their buildings. The participants believed that establishing literacy-focused learning environments can positively impact the learning outcomes of all students based on their lived experiences.

Implications for Policy

The findings in this study denote that the participants recognize that the mindset of those in leadership roles has to change when it concerns collaborating and including school libraries as literacy partners when designing and providing literacy instruction to students stems from the absence of vision communicated by the top (Mastur, 2023). Participants attribute the reasons collaboration does not exist in K12 learning environments to the absence of a communicated literacy vision, a deficit in teacher preparation coursework, professional development opportunities and activities that are centered around offering literacy-based strategies, and the resources that can assist classroom teachers with developing literacy skills in their students. All participants agreed that to be effective in leading literacy in their building, educators must be offered opportunities for professional development and the ability to build teams that collaborate. According to the participants these are fundamental to ensuring students become literate adults who can become productive citizens.

Additionally, the data findings suggest that institutions of higher education consider how to incorporate literacy-based instructional strategies into the coursework offered in teacher preparation classes (Robertson et al., 2020). Several participants indicated that they seek outside learning opportunities to remain current in the practice of providing instruction to their students when implementing and initiating literacy activities. The participants acknowledge that they are learning to be more effective literacy leaders while acquiring knowledge and expertise on the different ways to incorporate literacy strategies and the available resources that can be integrated into learning environments. Being a part of a literacy team does not mean that you automatically become a literacy expert, it requires specialized training as Debbie stated, "School libraries are staffed with those who are trained and certified literacy experts."

Although the instructional leader in the school building is the principal, the educators who participated in this study strongly believe that creating time and space to collaborate with school libraries and subject matter experts is a necessity to ensure that students are being provided the best education. Therefore, at the district level, planning and professional development opportunities should be intentionally focused on providing literacy strategies that teachers can transfer into their classrooms. For these implications, school districts should focus on identifying and establishing guidelines to create a culture of literacy that is consistent from one school building to another in their district, while college preparation coursework for teachers should include a course that requires students to learn to use the library as a tool to impact learning.

Implications for Practice

The study revealed practical implications for educators and school districts, as the findings identified that the participants understood, recognized, and fully supported the need to create time and space for collaboration in their buildings. Furthermore, the data indicated that the perception educators have of how school libraries contribute to literacy will continue to be a work in progress. However, school libraries must be visible and persistent to ensure they are recognized as valuable resources that can contribute to closing the literacy gap that exists among students in society today. Those who lead schools should communicate their vision, and set expectations of staff members in their school buildings.

Literacy leaders in turn should ensure that all activities and programs are literacy-driven to develop a growth mindset. A shift in mindset will enable everyone to shift their thought process to become more literacy-driven in all staff who provide services to all students. For example, in Alessandria's in-depth interview response, she stated, "I'm going to focus my

attention on the people who want to collaborate with me."

Considering that each participant's focus is on the students and their success, their thoughts to be intentional and consistent to create time and space for collaborating go a long way to creating a culture in school buildings of inclusivity and collaboration that is literacy-focused while changing the mindset of those who are there every day for the students (Srirahayu, 2021). As Damien noted, "There must be a way to include the Library/Media Specialist in collaborative conversations to support teachers in instruction for all students." The mindset of staff is pivotal when creating an inclusive school culture that is literacy-focused as educators should consider the needs of the school and the students, first and foremost.

Empirical and Theoretical Implications

As educators around the world attempt to determine the best way to ensure learners are prepared to live and work in the 21st century there is a growing concern in the United States about the low level of competency learners exhibit particularly in math and science. A growing concern about meeting the demands for elevated levels of literacy necessary to compete in the technological workplace of the future (Clote, 2017; Kuhlthau, 2021). In the technology-advanced society learners live in today, school libraries and educational technology offer and provide support to promote literacy in K12 learning environments (Merga, 2020; Kuhlthau, 2021). School libraries and educational technology, along with collaboration between educators promote literacy and positively impact the literacy skills of K12 learners (Eutsler, 2022; Lance & Kachel, 2018).

Empirical Implications

There was a gap in empirical evidence related to the preparation and development of strategies to teach literacy in teacher preparation coursework that was nonexistent. As education

serves a diverse population of students, preparing and developing educators to meet the needs of the diversity in schools requires institutions of higher learning to provide coursework that is reflective of the world as it exists today. The collective responses of the participants in this study were consistent with the findings in the literature that educators lack coursework to prepare them to teach literacy skills to students (Cox, 2018; Fagan et al., 2021; Robertson et al., 2020). This study disclosed how educators acknowledge the importance of developing a culture of literacy is dependent on ensuring that collaboration opportunities exist between educators and those who are qualified and certified literacy experts, inclusive of school libraries and educational technology can make an impact on closing the literacy gap that exists in learners today. Qualified trained literacy experts know how to foster a culture of literacy and can include strategies and resources to meet the needs of learners in K12 learning environments.

Theoretical Implications

Vygotsky and Leont'ev's (1978) activity theory informed the theoretical implications of this study as the focal point centered around the activities of those who engage in dialogue to understand different perspectives and provide a rich context to understand how people collaborate (Chu et al., 2011; Hasan & Kazlauskas, 2014; Hashim & Jones, 2007). The 12 participants in this study expressed the desire, as well as a need to be provided with more opportunities to collaborate with staff and other colleagues about how to be more effective literacy leaders. In addition, the participants stressed the importance of professional development and training that are focused on designing and providing literacy instruction for their students based on their experiences and reflections.

The literature denotes that a literacy-focused vision is necessary and should be communicated from the top. Communicating a vision in school cultures that is literacy-focused is

essential to the role of being a literacy leader to effectively provide instruction for students in today's societies and educators in the role are not appropriately trained to prepare and provide literacy instruction in learning environments as they exist today. As educators shared their experiences, Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning revealed how environmental and cognitive factors influence human behavior. Scarlett stated, "Kids today have access to so many different tools and they learn differently, this is why we have to adapt to the way they learn to reach them." Based on responses to the research questions presented in Chapter 4, the participants consistently referred to the need to stay current on the trends; all of them reported the desire to collaborate with others to be effective in their work. The findings from this study demonstrate how the two theoretical frameworks collectively work in unison when exploring how the lived experiences of educators have contributed to developing their attitudes and beliefs about the value school libraries and educational technology contribute to student achievement.

Limitations and Delimitations

In research, there are limitations and delimitations. The limitations in this study denote the circumstances that were beyond my control, however, made major contributions to the outcome of this research. The delimitations in this study were intentionally decided upon to ensure that data collected from this research ensured creditability and reliability for the study to be replicated.

Limitations

Two major limitations of this study could be addressed in future research. The first limitation exists in the diversity and ethnicity of the research participants who are endorsed in Library/Media PreK-12 in the state of Virginia for this study. The second limitation that exists is in the race, gender, and ethnicity of the research participants who were endorsed in the state of

Virginia in Reading, English, Library/Media PreK-12, and Administration and Supervision in the state of Virginia.

Delimitations

Two major delimitations in this study could be addressed in future research. The first delimitation exists in only including participants who are fully licensed, and not provisionally licensed, with the endorsement criteria for this research in the state of Virginia. The decision to focus on participants who are fully licensed and not provisionally licensed was to ensure that the participants had the training and expertise required by Virginia to effectively implement literacy programs in K12 learning environments. The second delimitation can be found in the use of Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology approach to find commonalities that provide new meaning among the participants to aid in eliminating any existing biases around the phenomenon, the research questions, and the site. Based on the intent of the research, being specific to educators in Central Virginia who implement literacy programs in K12 learning environments, the research questions, participant journals, participant interviews, and focus group provided the opportunities for the participants to provide a detailed description of their reflective experiences, creating themes that represented the shared experiences of the educators with the phenomenon.

Recommendations for Future Research

The composite makeup of schools varies in roles and there is a clear delineation between the roles of teachers as literacy experts and that of school libraries and educational technology to support literacy. Instructional leaders of schools often delegate Reading Specialists and English teachers to lead literacy initiatives that impact student learning; yet, educators seem to be unaware of the literacy training a certified school librarian receives in their coursework when

preparing to become a school library media specialist (Lewis, 2021). The results of this study identify that educators are not afforded sufficient time to establish collaborative relationships with colleagues, in their buildings or out of their buildings. Collaboration and professional development were important to the educators who are literacy leaders to be effective for students. The study results also indicated that the training to prepare to become teachers should have a literacy focus, which currently is limited or nonexistent in higher education.

A transcendental phenomenological study was the approach used to discover how the experiences of educators impact how they perceive the use of school libraries and educational technology as methods to promote and increase the literacy skills of students in K12 learning environments. This research indicates that the Virginia Department of Education should reassess current teacher preparation programs to include comprehensive coursework that specifically aligns with the literacy skills outlined for students in the State of Virginia. To teach literacy, educators should possess the knowledge to do so (Eutsler, 2022; Kimbell-Lopez et al., 2023; Robertson et al., 2020).

One theory for future research could be that of Organizational Role Theory. Vancouver (1996) described organizational role theory as the defining of roles based on the expectations of those in a specific position. Research on this topic, utilizing this theory may change the perceptions of educators regarding school libraries and educational technology as literacy leaders of 21st-century skills and not just placeholders, as described by several participants in this study (Mastur, 2023). Future studies might also examine how educators seek knowledge of strategies and practices to teach literacy using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach to examine the lived experiences of the phenomenon from the perspective of the researcher. Additionally, this investigation for further study could also be developed into a quantitative study to ascertain the

perception of educators' abilities to create and implement effective literacy instruction into the curriculum.

Conclusion

This transcendental phenomenological study was developed to understand the experiences of educators with school libraries and educational technology to close the literacy gap. This study revealed that not all educators are prepared to teach literacy when training and taking coursework to become teachers, as revealed in the literature reviewed for this study. Using Vygotsky and Lenot'ev's (1978) activity theory and Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning, the study collectively explored the experiences of 12 educators with semi-structured interviews, participant journals, and a focus group. The analysis of data collected from the above source employed the use of Moustakas' six steps and a thematic analysis by applying horizontalization to discover themes related to collective experiences. Four major themes emerged during this process (create time and space, creating literacy initiatives based on self-analysis, leading literacy with collaboration, and changing the minds of educators to develop a culture of literacy).

The primary findings of this investigation are that educators lack the time and space for collaboration with internal and external literacy experts to stay current on strategies and practices to make informed decisions when designing literacy instructions. In addition, the findings note that educators lack literacy training and preparation in coursework from institutions of higher learning when preparing to become teachers (Arredondo, 2021; Nelson et al., 2020). The participants in the study all shared that there is a lack of practical knowledge of how school libraries and educational technology are literacy leaders and should be embraced as such.

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Appendix A: School District/Site Permission

Date:

Superintendent
[School District]

Dear [Superintendent Name]

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Philosophy of Education Doctorate in Instructional Design and Technology. The title of my research project is Educator Experiences with Libraries and Educational Technology to Close the Literacy Gap: A Phenomenological Study and the purpose of my research is to explore the lived experiences of educators to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries with the use of educational technology contributes to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments. I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research in your [school district/school name].

Participants will be asked to scan the QR Code provided to contact me to schedule an interview. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

For educational research, school/district permission should be on an approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s). Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to ███████████████ from your school district email address.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Jones
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Appendix B: IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

October 12, 2023

Pamela Jones
Matthew Ozolnieks

Re: IRB Exemption - IRB-FY23-24-207 EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATORS WITH LIBRARIES AND EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY TO CLOSE THE LITERACY GAP: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

Dear Pamela Jones, Matthew Ozolnieks,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under the following exemption category, which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:104(d):

Category 2.(iii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7).

For a PDF of your exemption letter, click on your study number in the My Studies card on your Cayuse dashboard. Next, click the Submissions bar beside the Study Details bar on the Study details page. Finally, click Initial under Submission Type and choose the Letters tab toward the bottom of the Submission Details page. Your information sheet and final versions of your study documents can also be found on the same page under the Attachments tab.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,
G. Michele Baker, PhD, CIP
Administrative Chair
Research Ethics Office

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter and Consent Forms

Date: _____

Dear Administrator:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Philosophy of Education Doctorate in Instructional Design and Technology. The purpose of my research is to explore the lived experiences of educators to discover their attitudes and beliefs regarding the role school libraries with the use of educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments.

If you are a K12 public school educator with an endorsement in administration and supervision, K12 endorsed Library/Media Specialist, or Reading Specialist who leads literacy instructions and initiatives and you are willing to participate, you will be asked to journal your literacy experiences for a period of two weeks writing a minimum of four journal entries, participate in an interview, and participate in one focus group session. Focus group sessions are scheduled for _____at_____. Also, you will be asked to review the interview transcript and provide corrections to me. It should take approximately three and a half hours total for you to complete the tasks listed. Your name and/or other identifying information will be collected as part of your participation, but this information will remain confidential.

To participate, click on the QR Code provided to complete the screening survey.

If you meet the criteria for the study based on your screening survey responses and are selected to participate, a consent document will be attached to your acceptance email which you will receive via the digital signature tool GoFormz The consent document contains additional information about my research, please electronically sign the consent document. Once I receive your signed consent document, you will receive your electronic journal, and I will contact you to set up your interview.

Sincerely,

Pamela M. Jones
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Consent Form

Title of the Project: Experiences of Educators with Libraries and Educational Technology to Close the Literacy Gap: A Phenomenological Study
Principal Investigator: Pamela M. Jones, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be licensed to teach in the State of Virginia and be a school-building level educator with an endorsement in one of the following areas: Library/Media, Reading, English, or Administration and Supervision.

Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of this study is to discover the attitudes and beliefs of educators regarding the role school libraries with educational technology contribute to the development of literacy skills of learners in K12 learning environments.

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. **Participant Journals** The participants will receive an electronic journal by email using Google Docs with guiding prompts and have one week to complete it. Participants will be asked to journal their literacy experiences for two weeks by writing four journal entries. It should take approximately 15 minutes to complete each journal prompt. Each participant will be responsible for documenting their reflective thoughts and three to five experiences in a paragraph format, each involving an area that positively or negatively affected their daily practice of leading or participating in literacy initiatives. Participants can take as much time as needed to complete the minimum writing requirement; however, participants will receive electronic reminders on days one and three to complete the journaling process.
2. **Interviews** The interview protocol will consist of 20 open-ended questions. The interviews will occur in a virtual setting. There will be two recording devices, a voice memo recorder on an iPhone and via Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet, which will later be transcribed using the QDA Miner software. The interview will last approximately 30-45 minutes. Before the interview, the researcher will ask via email whether the Zoom or Google Meet call will be recorded with the camera on or off. The interviewee will determine whether they will be recorded with or without the video camera. The researcher will send the participant calendar invites with a link to join.
3. **Focus Group** Focus groups will be on Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet in an uninterrupted private space for the participant. The focus groups will be recorded, and the participants can determine whether they will have their cameras on or off. The focus group will last for approximately 30-45 minutes.

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study. Benefits to society include increased leadership in literacy practices when collaborating with school libraries with educational technology that will result in satisfying the goal of education to prepare learners to become literate adults in the 21st century.

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Site locations and participant responses will be kept confidential with the use of pseudonyms. Interviews will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation, and the researcher will wear headphones during the virtual interview.
- Participants will be assured that all data from interviews, and recordings will be stored on the researcher's flash drive and not on the researcher's personal computer device. All data collected that is stored on the researcher's flash drive will be password protected and kept in a locked safe to which only the researcher has access. The printed reflective journals created by the participants will be stored electronically, password protected, to which only the researcher has access. All data from each collection method will be stored electronically and password protected and not on the researcher's personal computer device. After three years, all electronic records and hardcopy data will be deleted and shredded.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings and the participant journal will be stored electronically, password protected, to which only the researcher has access. All data from each collection method will be stored electronically and password protected and not on the researcher's computer device. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.
- Participants will be assured of the greatest efforts to maintain confidentiality and will be advised that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.

The researcher conducting this study is Pamela Jones. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at ████████████. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Matthew O. Ozolnieks at ███████████████████.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of this document with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_____ Printed Subject Name

_____ Signature & Date

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Hello and thank you for participating. Please introduce yourself.
2. How long have you been an educator, and in your current role? CRQ
3. What motivated you to pursue a career in education? CRQ
4. Were there books in your home when growing up? If so, was there someone who read to you regularly and what type of books were read to you? If not, why do you think there were none? SQ1
5. How often did you visit the school library during your formative years? If you never visited the school library, what prevented you from visiting? SQ1
6. Did you enjoy going to the library during your youth? If yes, what activities did you participate in when visiting? If not, what would you have preferred to have done instead? SQ1
7. What role do you believe school libraries have in developing literacy skills in learners? CRQ
8. In your view, how does collaboration between school libraries and educators increase literacy among learners in K12 learning environments? SQ2
9. To what degree do you think collaboration with school libraries impacted student learning in the 21st century? SQ3
10. Tell me about your experiences providing literacy instruction to learners? CRQ & SQ3
11. What techniques do you use, or did you use in the classroom to get and keep students engaged as active participants in their own learning? SQ2
12. What is your level of expertise with the use of educational technology in learning environments? SQ1
13. How do you think integrating technology into learning environments impacts the development of literacy skills in learners? SQ2
14. To what degree do you think educational technology has in developing the literacy skills of learners in the 21st century? CRQ & SQ3
15. What are your experiences integrating educational technology into literacy instruction that you provide to learners? SQ1 & SQ3
16. What role do you believe educational technology in learning environments has on the development of literacy skills in learners? SQ1
17. What techniques do you use, or have you used in the classroom to get and keep students engaged as active participants in their own learning? SQ2
18. How would you suggest libraries and technology be integrated into classroom curricula in learning environments? CRQ & SQ1
19. In your current role, when collaborating with other educators to develop literacy activities and events in the learning environment, how do you share your vision for promoting literacy? CRQ & SQ2
20. How do you describe your self-reflection experiences when communicating your vision for designing literacy instruction that is inclusive of school libraries and educational technology? CRQ & SQ3

Appendix E: Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions
1. Hello and thank you for participating, please introduce yourself to the group. CRQ
2. How long have you been an educator, and what is your current role? CRQ
3. What motivated you to pursue a career in education? CRQ
4. What role did libraries have in the pursuit of your education? SQ1
5. What purpose do you think libraries have in schools and communities? SQ1
6. What changes are taking place in learning environments and what effect will the changes have on learners? CRQ
7. How do you think school libraries contribute to the development of literacy skills in learners today? SQ2
8. How do you think children who are read to during their formative years impact the way they view literacy?
9. How do you think the integration of educational technology into learning environments can contribute to the development of literacy skills in learners today? SQ2
10. How would you suggest libraries and schools collaborate to impact the academic successes of students in K12 learning environments in the future? SQ3
11. Would you like to share anything further?

Appendix F: Audit Trail

Date	Action
6/28/2023	Received proposal committee approval
7/1/2023	Dissertation chair submitted for Director Review
7/22/2023	Received Director approval
8/5/2023	Successfully defended proposal
10/12/2023	Received IRB approval letter along with minor revisions made to several forms that were corrected by the IRB to be used
10/12/2023	Completed pilot study
10/13/2023	Sent two school districts request for permission letters
10/18/2023	Completed and set up GoFormz account to receive digital signatures
10/22/2023	Created protected files on external hard drive
11/12/2023	Received one district approval; sent site approval request to two schools
11/14/2023	Received site approval from one of the two schools sent to one of the school districts
11/16/2023	Received site approval from the second school in the same school district
11/26/2023	Prepared and sent two additional school districts request for permission letters
11/26/2023	Began recruiting participants
12/2/2023	Received approval from one of the two additional school districts
12/3/2023	Five participants from one school district, one elementary and one middle, completed the screening survey
12/5/2023	Sent email research acceptance to five participants; along with the link to sign and date the consent form and journaling instructions
12/10/2023	Received screening survey from three additional participants
12/11/2023	Sent email research acceptance to three participants; along with the link to sign and date the consent form.
12/13/2023	Received notification from one of the school districts that my request to conduct research had been denied.
12/13/2023	Set up virtual interviews with participants
12/14/2023	Purchased QDA Miner software
12/20/2023	Prepared and send two additional school districts request for permission to conduct research
2/3/2024	Completed final 1st round interviews
2/9/2024	Received approval from last school district
2/9/2024	Sent recruitment letters
2/11/2024	Scheduled 2nd set of virtual interviews for remaining participants
2/11/2024	Began analyzing 1st round participant interviews, journal entries
2/22/2024	Completed 2nd round of virtual interviews
2/24/2024	Completed focus group interviews
3/1/2024	Review of data
3/6/2024	Review of data
3/9/2024	Completed review of data

Appendix G: Email Reminder

Dear Participant:

Thank you for participating in the research study. This email serves as a reminder that we are in the participation portion of the study. Please use the guiding prompts to journal your experiences related to leading literacy instruction/initiatives inclusive of school libraries with educational technology. Remember, you may add additional details and information related to your experiences leading literacy instruction/initiatives inclusive of school libraries with educational technology in your school building. If you have any questions or concerns, please use the contact information below.

Best regards,

Pamela M. Jones

Appendix H: Electronic Journal Instructions & Prompts

Electronic Journal Instructions: Please journal your experiences related to leading literacy instruction/initiatives inclusive of school libraries with educational technology over the next two weeks. A minimum of four journal entries over the course of the two weeks is required. Guiding prompts are provided below as a suggestion. However, you may include additional details or information. Please date each entry and write one to five paragraphs with a 100-word minimum.

Guiding Prompts:

- How do you think your prior experience or experiences with school libraries has contributed to how you use this resource to promote literacy in your building?

- What opportunities did you have this week to incorporate the school library into instruction?

- What opportunities did you have this week to incorporate the use of educational technology into instruction?

- What opportunities did you have this week to collaborate with a colleague(s) about integrating school libraries into instruction?

- How do you maximize collaborative opportunities?

- Reflect on any moral or ethical dilemmas that could or did occur.

Date:

Journal Entry:

Appendix I: Researcher's Reflective Journal

Date	Reflective Notes
10/9/2023	I have not received IRB approval for this study, I am beginning to get nervous about completing this study during this semester.
10/9/2023	Today, the pilot study was conducted with two educators who each hold reading specialist certification in public K12 learning environments. During this pilot study, I noted that although some of my questions for the interviews and focus group were similar in nature, there were opportunities for the participants to expound on how their early childhood experiences with school libraries and educational technology have contributed to how they integrate these resources into their professional lives. The feedback I received enabled me to recognize that the similarities in the questions would offer me a broad view of the experiences of educators as they were able to be open to sharing their experiences about the impact school libraries and educational technology had in their development.
10/12/2023	Finally received IRB approval today.
10/12/2023	As I completed the piloted study, it became obvious that some interview questions needed to be revised.
11/12/2023	Upon receiving one district's approval, I began to realize that the timing to complete this process was beyond my control as the holidays for educators was quickly approaching.
11/15/2023	Four participants completed the consent forms via GoFormz and they were contacted to schedule an interview. Three of the interviews were conducted on 11/30/2022. I had to be flexible due to the holidays.
12/1/2023	Completed transcribing interviews and sent them to each participant for member checking.
12/13/2023	I was somewhat disappointed to receive a denial of my request to conduct my research, as it was one of the largest school districts in Central Virginia.
12/15/2024	Today, I received site approval for another district, so now I have two approvals, but I am still uneasy with the delays in receiving needed approvals. I also am beginning to think that I need to consider changing my recruitment process to snowballing so that I can reach saturation in this study.
1/1/2024	Changed my recruitment method to snowballing and started to reach out to school librarians, as I feel that I do not have enough school librarians in the number to reach saturation.
1/4/2024	Contacted the two school librarians who participated in the study for referrals. From those referrals, the email addresses of school librarians from three school districts' websites and I sent via email to them the recruitment letter which contained the screening survey.

1/13/2024	One participant completed their online screening tool. Sent the consent form, and an interview was scheduled for 1/17/2024.
1/17/2024	I conducted the interview with the participant, explained what would happen next regarding the focus group interview. I transcribed the interview immediately and sent it to the participant for member-checking.
1/17/2024	Received notification of the completion of the online screening from another participant, sent consent form and scheduled an interview for 1/20/2024.
1/20/2024	I conducted the interview with the participant, explained what would happen next regarding the focus group interview. I transcribed the interview immediately and sent it to the participant for member-checking.