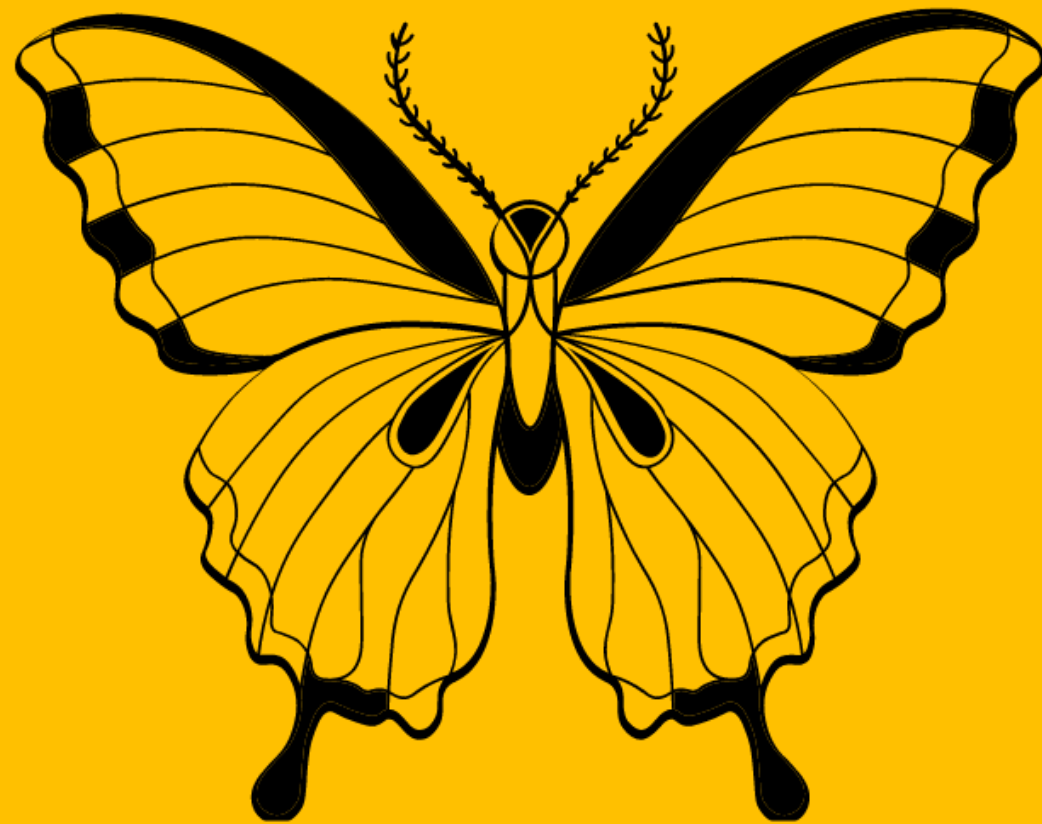


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2022



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Implementing Content Literacy and Disciplinary Literacy: A Mixed Methods Study of Middle School Teachers' Pedagogical Dispositions

A dissertation presented to the faculty of the College of Education and Social Work

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education

March, 2021

Dr. Madison Weary



A little about my educational background

Ed.D., West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Policy, Planning, and Administration: Curriculum and Instruction

M.Ed., West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Literacy and Reading Specialist Certification

B.S.Ed., Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
Secondary Education, Social Studies

A little bit about my teaching experiences

Five years as an adjunct professor in the Literacy Department at WCU

- EDR 120: College Reading and Study Skills (Academic Success Program)
- EDR 514: Reading in the Content Areas

Currently serve as a reading specialist in the Kennett Consolidated School District
10 years as a middle school classroom teacher just outside of Philadelphia

Instructional II Certifications:

- Reading Specialist (PK-12)
- Social Studies (7-12)
- ELA (6-9)
- Math (6-9)
- Science (6-9)

Introduction

This two-phase explanatory sequential mixed-methods study focused on content area teachers' pedagogical dispositions toward implementing content area and disciplinary literacy strategies and skills into their instruction.

Premise for research



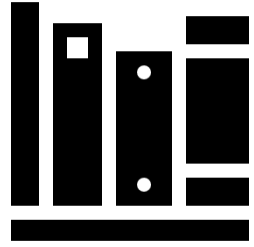
Methodology



Findings

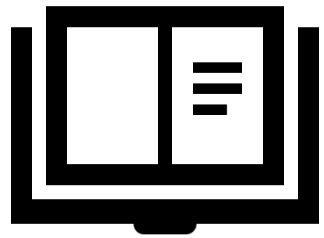
Implications

Research Problem



Content area teachers' literacy implementation

- Bandura, 1977; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Graham et al., 2017; McCoss-Yergian & Krepps, 2010; Ness, 2009; Nourie & Lenski, 1998; Richardson et al., 1991



Content area literacy versus disciplinary literacy

- Brozo et al., 2013; Hinchman & O'Brien, 2019; O'Byrne et al. 2020; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008



Professional development and training

- Bandura, 1977; Cantrell & Hughes, 2008; Graham et al., 2017; Ness, 2009; O'Byrne et al., 2020; Trotter, 2006

Research Questions

1. What self-efficacy beliefs do content area teachers hold in regards to content area and disciplinary literacy strategies and skills? (quan)
2. How do content area teachers describe their decision-making process in regards to the implementation of content area literacy and disciplinary literacy strategies and skills within their planning and classroom instruction? (qual)
3. In what ways do teachers' experiences and training inform their dispositions toward literacy instruction? (qual)

Key Terms

Content Area Literacy

- Generalize and apply across disciplines
- Often categorized synonymously as metacognitive reading strategies
 - Self-monitoring
 - Purpose for reading
 - Questioning
 - Visualizing
 - Predicting
 - Annotating
 - Summarizing/Paraphrasing
 - Making connections

Disciplinary Literacy

- Discipline-specific in nature
 - Historians question and contextualize their sources
 - Scientists might look for a process or a hypothesis instead of contextualizing the information
- Readers take on the role of disciplinary experts and interacting with the text as such (Brozo et al., 2013).

Literature Review

The Habits of Good Readers

Teachers can benefit from understanding the habits of good readers so that they can plan and integrate explicit strategy and skill instruction into their daily lessons (Allington, 2013; Duffy, 2002; Duke & Pearson, 2002).

Effective Implementation

Effective implementation of reading comprehension instruction includes both explicit instruction as well as interacting with text in authentic, meaningful ways (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Pressley, 2006).

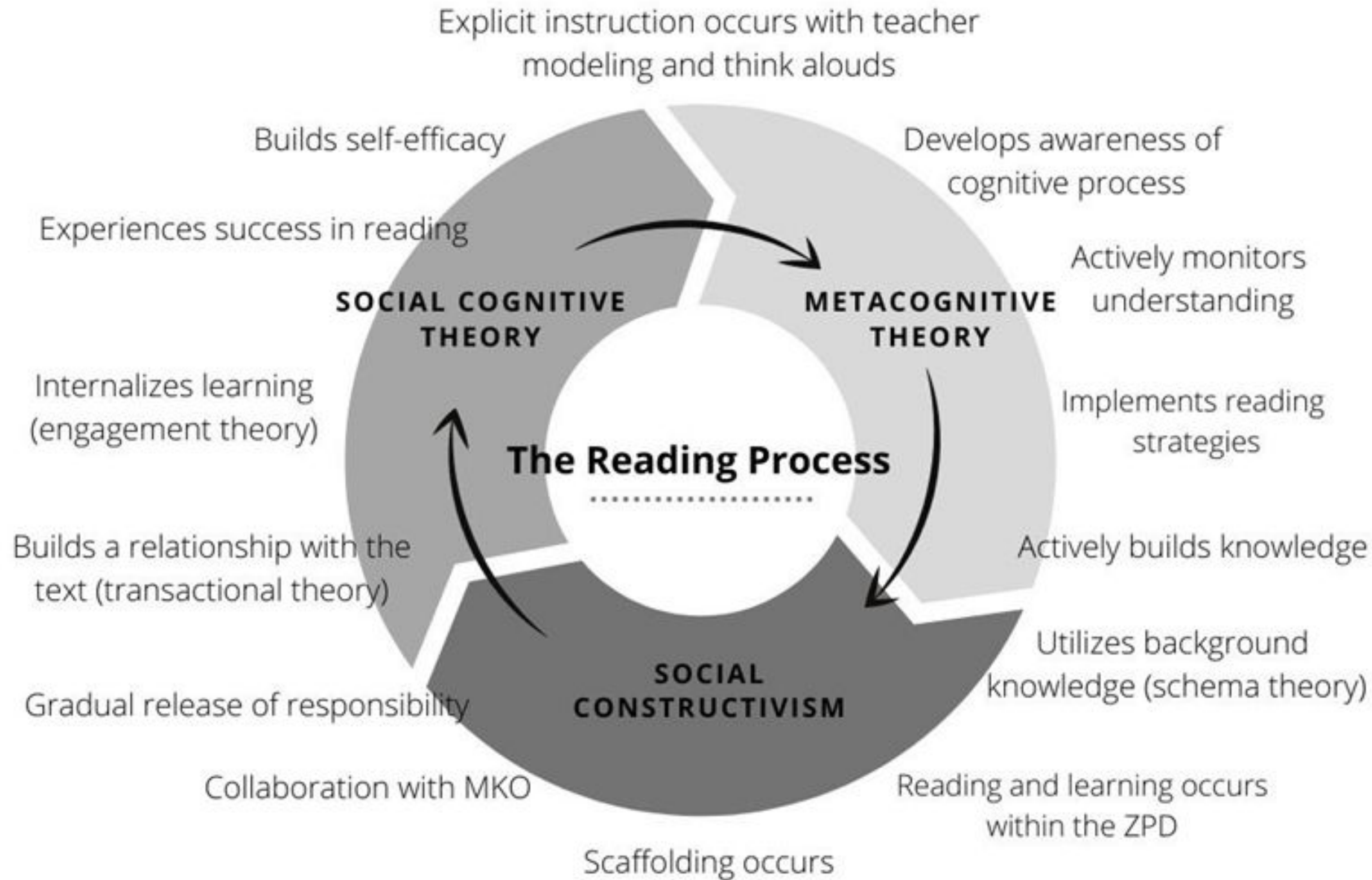
Teachers' Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Teachers' beliefs toward reading influence their planning and implementation (Nourie & Lenski, 1998; Richardson et al., 1991), whereas Ness (2009) found that content area teachers are often reluctant to provide explicit reading comprehension instruction within their secondary classrooms.

Content Area and Disciplinary Literacy

Although different from one another, teachers often use the terms content area literacy and disciplinary literacy interchangeably (O'Byrne et al., 2020). Within the field, there is a "tension between content area literacy, or generalized literacy instruction, and disciplinary literacy, or discipline-specific literacy instruction" (Graham et al., 2017, p. 78).

Theoretical Framework



Setting and Participants



Setting

- Public, suburban middle school
- Mid-Atlantic region
- Grades 6, 7, and 8
- Serves approximately 980 students



Phase I Participants

- 40 middle school content area teachers
- 26 participants
- Science, social studies, mathematics, and ELA



Phase II Participants

- Purposeful selection
- Four participants
- One from each content area
- Demonstrated high self-efficacy and knowledge of literacy implementation

Methodology

Table of Strategy, Sample, Goals, and Analysis			
Strategy	Sample	Goals	Analysis
Quantitative survey	Stratified random sample of middle school content area teachers (math, science, social studies, ELA).	Assess teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and knowledge of content area and disciplinary literacy strategy and skill implementation. Inform the purposeful selection for Phase II participants	Descriptive statistics
Semi-structured interviews	Purposive: Four content area teachers from the quantitative sample who demonstrate high self-efficacy beliefs and knowledge of content area and disciplinary literacy strategy and skill implementation.	Uncover the decision-making processes of the participants regarding the planning and implementation of literacy strategies and skills. Explore how teachers' training and professional development sessions inform their dispositions toward literacy instruction.	Case study analysis utilizing <i>in vivo</i> codes and first and second-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009)

Instrumentation

Phase I - Quantitative

Qualtrics Survey

- Nine-point Likert scale
- Demographic data
- The Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI; Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).
- The Content Area Literacy Instruction Survey (CALIS)

Phase II - Qualitative

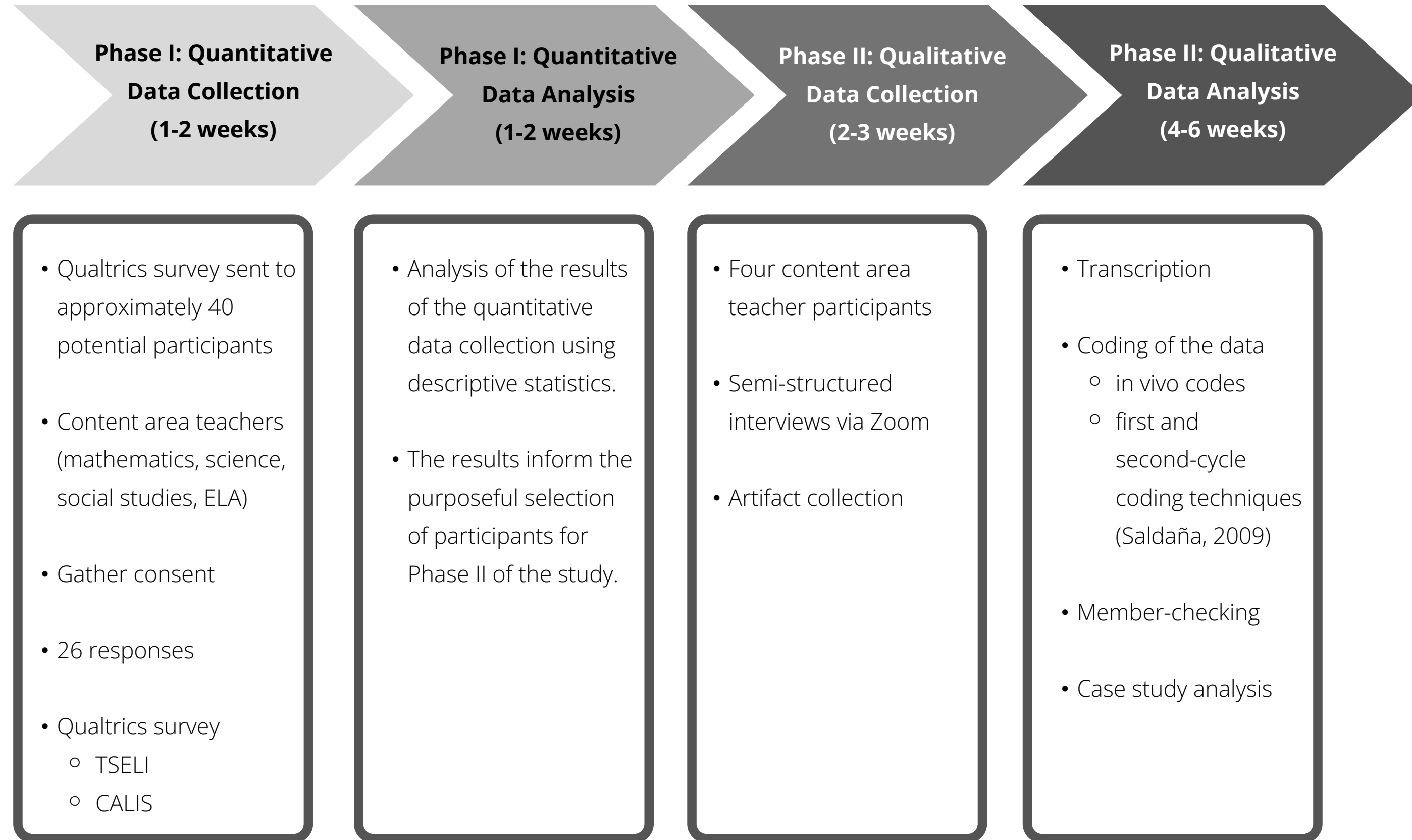
Semi-Structured Interviews

- Conducted via Zoom
- 11 Questions

Artifact Collection

- Curriculum Guides
- Lesson Plans

Study Timeline



Data Analysis

Phase I - Quantitative

Descriptive Statistics

- SPSS
- TSELI; CALIS; Overall
- Subscales
- Principal Component Analysis
- F-test (One-Way ANOVA)
- Tukey Multiple Comparison Test

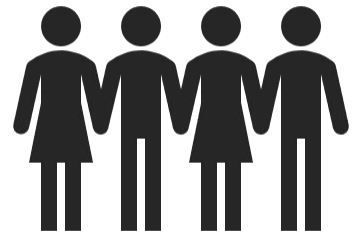
Phase II - Qualitative **Coding**

- Dedoose
- in vivo codes
- First and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2009)

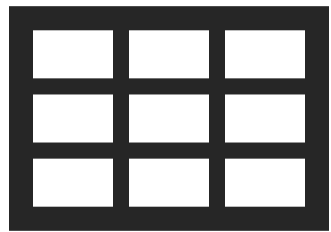
Case Study Analysis

- Yin's (2018) case study framework
- Within-case and cross-case themes

Quantitative Findings

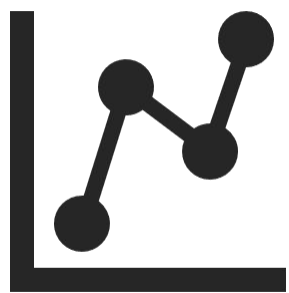


Participants' overall scores informed the purposeful selection of four participants for Phase II



Principal Component (Factor) Analysis

- Note-taking and implementation of disciplinary literacy strategies and skills
- Several other latent variables:
 - Implementation of content area literacy strategies and skills
 - Writing
 - Oral reading and word study
 - Meeting students' needs



Statistically significant differences between:

- ELA and Math
 - Assessment, meeting students' needs, & TSELI
- ELA and Science
 - Preparation
- Clustering of participants
 - TSELI & CALIS

Quantitative Findings

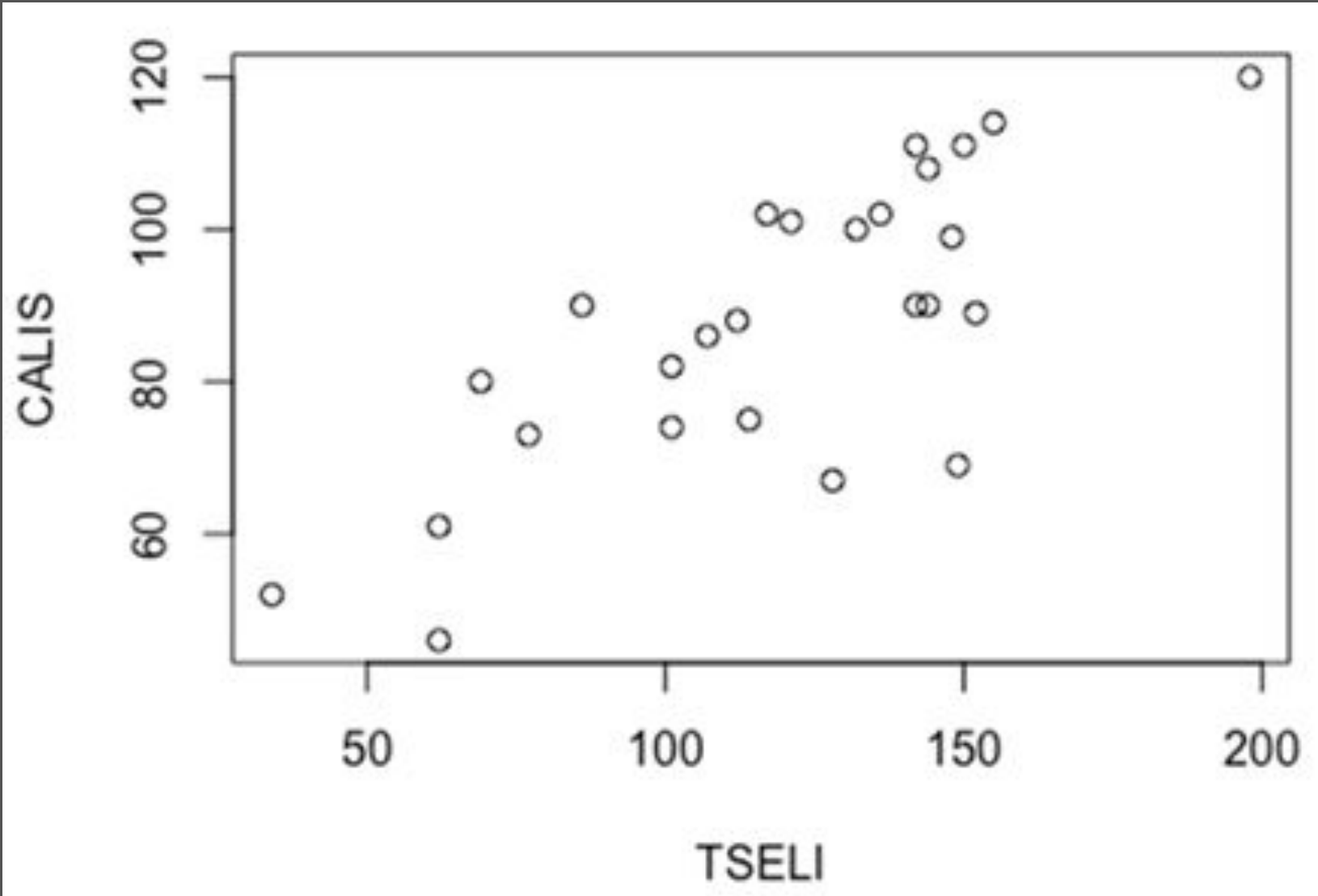


Figure 1

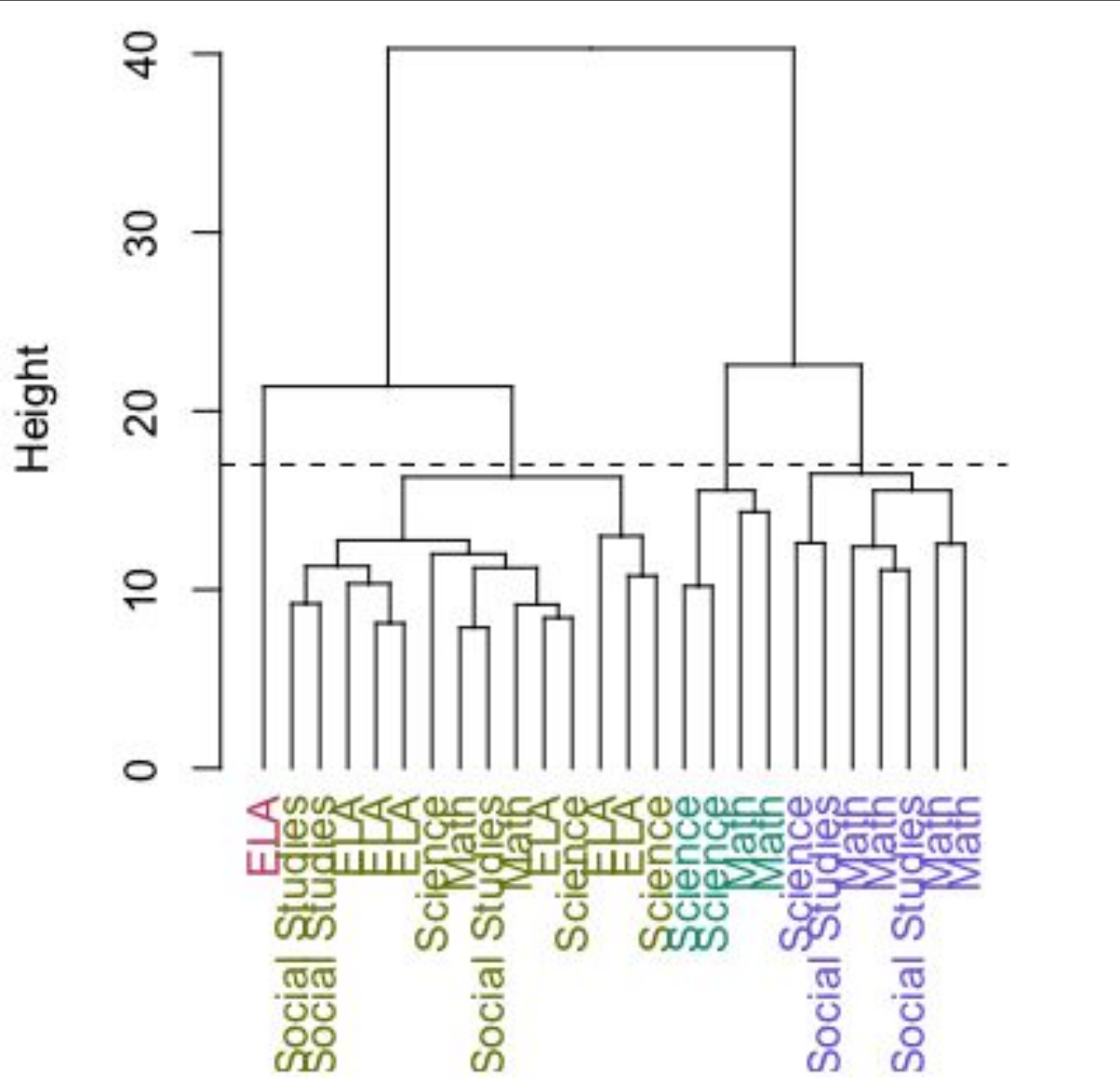
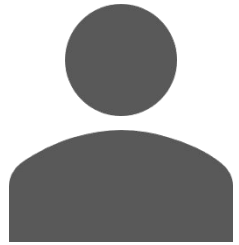


Figure 2

Qualitative Findings



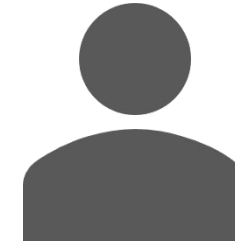
Michael

Social Studies



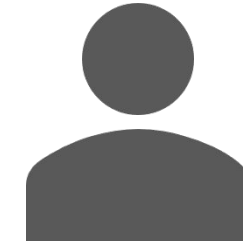
John

Mathematics



Anne

Science



Daniel

ELA



Approaches to
metacognitive
reading strategies
and reading
comprehension



Perceptions of
literacy instruction



Classroom
implementation



Uses of formative
and summative
assessment

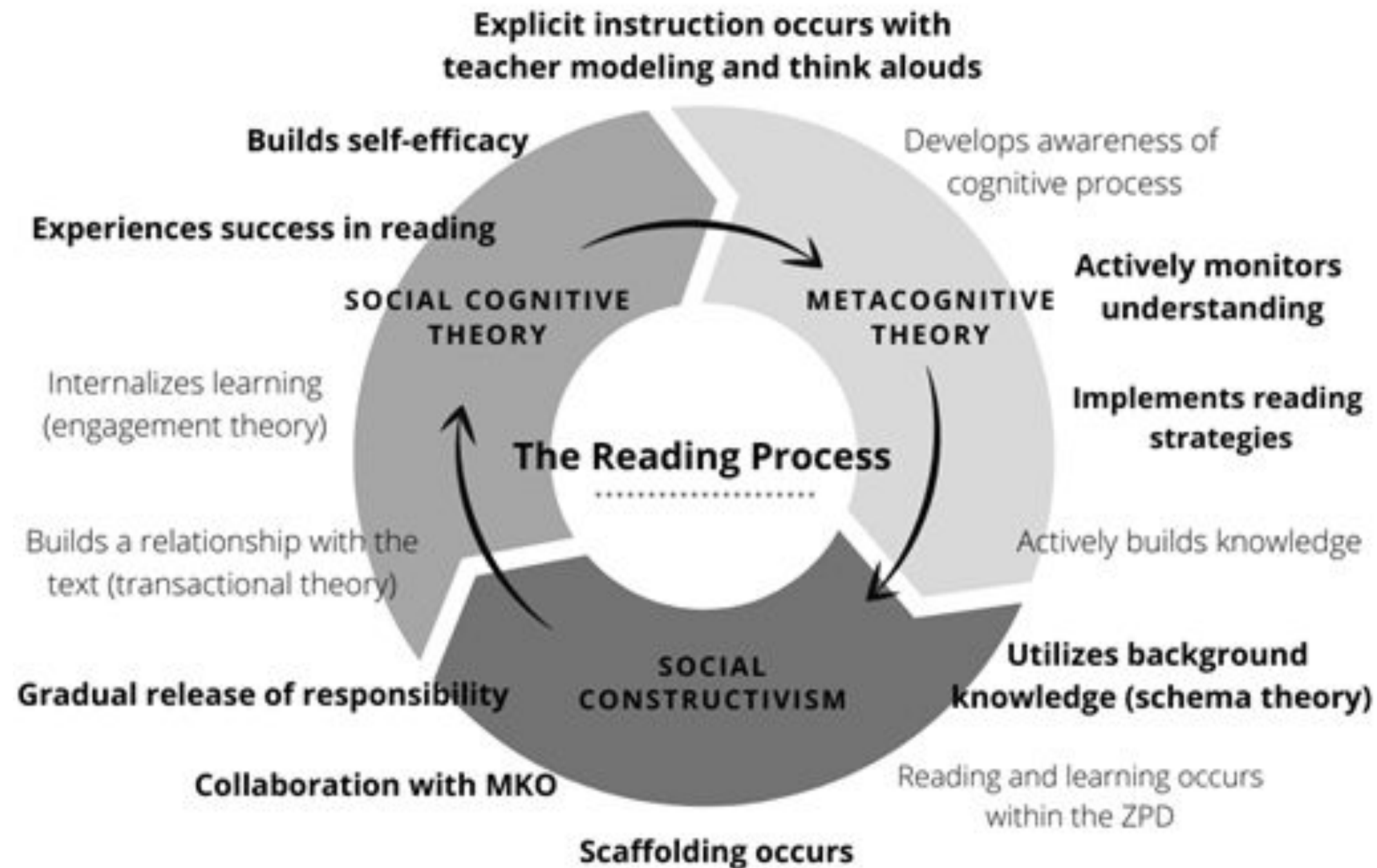


Uses of specific
strategies and skills



Educational and
professional
experiences

Application of Theoretical Framework



Qualitative Findings - Reading Comprehension

The Importance of Metacognitive Reading Strategies and Reading Comprehension

- Provided students with explicit metacognitive instruction
 - Actively think about their thinking
 - Previewing the text
 - Annotating
 - Summarizing
- The most significant area of need for their students continued to be their overall reading comprehension
 - Difficulty of textbooks

Participant Quote

"We don't often put the textbook in front of them and say, you know, read these pages because there's a lot of difficult passages."

Qualitative Findings - Perceptions of Literacy

Teachers' Perceptions of Literacy

- Demonstrated difficulty differentiating between content area literacy and disciplinary literacy
 - Interchangeable use of the terms
 - Research not yet reflected in classroom pedagogy
- Planning and implementation may not have been purposeful
- Other teachers reported less self-efficacy or literacy training

Participant Quote

“So in a historical or social studies setting, it would mean learning the skills that a historian actually uses.”

Qualitative Findings - Classroom Implementation

What Does Classroom Implementation Look Like?

- Implementation of strategies and skills occurred in the following ways:
 - Planning
 - Building lessons to meet curriculum standards and assessments
 - Scaffolding and building background knowledge
 - Modeling strategies and skills

Participant Quote

“I would model how to do it for maybe a class period or two, until I felt like they got a good grasp of it, and then after modeling that would be something that we do... like kind of a group activity.”

Qualitative Findings - Assessment

Teachers' Uses of Formative and Summative Assessment

- Attempted to incorporate shared language
- Demonstrated an understanding of students' abilities to generalize and transfer their skills to various situations.

Participant Quote

"[We're] using consistent terminology, framing everything the same way... really trying to hammer home that terminology, so that no matter where they are, no matter what the text is, we should be able to transfer that, you know, vocabulary term that should be part of their literary vocabulary."

Qualitative Findings - Strategies and Skills

Teachers' Uses of Specific Strategies and Skills

- Implemented both content area and disciplinary literacy strategies and skills
 - Content area literacy
 - Previewing and discussing domain vocabulary
 - Annotating text
 - Using graphic organizers
- Disciplinary literacy
 - Strategies and skills that were specific and unique to their respective subject areas

Participant Quote

"We really work on annotating word problems, circling clue words and phrases, underlining key information that needs to be pulled out."

Qualitative Findings - Experience

Teachers' Educational and Professional Experience

- All four participants:
 - Had taken literacy courses
 - Had teaching experience that intersected with literacy instruction or had taught at both the elementary and middle school levels
- Expressed that they perceived professional development to be a significant area of need

Participant Quote

"Something that needs to be improved in our district is professional development that gives us base skills... something like a literacy coach coming in and helping to show math teachers how they can help their students read math and understand math in that way, and then working with colleagues to do it, like model it."

LIMITATIONS



Small Sample Size



Purposeful selection of
teachers who demonstrated
high self-efficacy for literacy
implementation



COVID-19 Restrictions

Practical Implications

Content Area Teachers

Could benefit from...

- Understanding the habits of good readers
- A deeper understanding of content area and disciplinary literacy approaches
 - Purposeful planning
 - Hybrid model of literacy instruction

School Districts & Administrators

Could benefit from...

- A deeper understanding of content area literacy, disciplinary literacy, leading to an understanding of hybridity
- Considering teachers' subject areas
- Listening to teachers' needs and suggestions

Implications for Future Research

Content Area Teachers'
Implementation



Criticality of
Disciplinary Literacy



Educating Pre- and In-Service
Teachers



TAKE HOME POINTS

Model of Hybridity

Content area teachers can benefit from understanding the **habits of good readers** and using a **hybrid approach** for literacy implementation.

Content Area vs. Disciplinary

Even teachers with **high self-efficacy** for literacy implementation had **difficulty distinguishing** between content area literacy and disciplinary literacy.

Planning & Implementation

The ability to distinguish between content area literacy and disciplinary literacy is important for **purposeful planning**.

Professional Development

School districts and administrators can benefit from considering **teachers' input** and **subject areas** when they plan professional development.

Thank You

Committee Members:

Dr. Heather Schugar, Dr. Katie Solic, Dr. Kevin Flanigan

Cohort Committee Members:

Dr. Janice Pietrowicz; Dr. Thomas Pantazes

Other special thanks to:

Study participants, KU/WCU faculty, Cohort 3, family & friends

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