

2017

## **Pedagogy of the Transplanted: A Study of Selected First-Year Jamaican Immigrant Elementary School Teachers and Their Perspectives on South Carolina's Curriculum Processes**

Claudia Fletcher-Lambert  
*University of South Carolina*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#)

---

### **Recommended Citation**

Fletcher-Lambert, C.(2017). *Pedagogy of the Transplanted: A Study of Selected First-Year Jamaican Immigrant Elementary School Teachers and Their Perspectives on South Carolina's Curriculum Processes*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/4486>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [digres@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:digres@mailbox.sc.edu).

Pedagogy of the transplanted: A study of selected first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers and their perspectives on South Carolina's curriculum processes.

by

Claudia Fletcher-Lambert

Bachelor of Education  
University of the West Indies, 2007

Master of Arts in Education  
Wake Forest University, 2011

---

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Education in

Curriculum and Instruction

College of Education

University of South Carolina

2017

Accepted by:

Rhonda Jeffries, Major Professor

Daniella Cook, Committee Member

Doyle Stevick, Committee Member

Janie Goodman, Committee Member

Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

© Copyright by Claudia Fletcher-Lambert, 2017  
All Rights Reserved.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to all the teachers who have inspired me to become an educator. In particular, my early childhood teachers “Ms. Monica” and Miss McDonald. Their support and inspiration at that very early part of my life proved invaluable to my current achievement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I am grateful to the persons who have contributed to a challenging yet exciting journey which resulted in the completion of this work. I thank Dr. Rhonda Jeffries, my supervisor for helping me adhere to the requirements for completing this dissertation through her timely feedback and goal-oriented approach. I am also indebted to my committee members: Dr. Doyle Stevick for sharing his expertise in immigration and international research; Dr. Daniella Cook for her expertise in curriculum and for setting the stage for my understanding and application of theories; Dr. Janie Goodman for sharing her knowledge of and literature on case study research. I thank them also for the assurance that I could call on them at any time for advice.

I would like to thank two of my professors from previous institutions. Mr. Paul Ashley and Professor Zellejyne Jennings-Craig who, during my undergraduate studies, whet my appetite for exploring curriculum and instruction in various school contexts.

I am forever thankful to the participants in my study who graciously consented and made themselves available for interviews and observations. Also to the literacy coach for providing further insights for interpretation of results. I thank the friends, colleagues, administrators other staff, parents and students I have encountered in the United States particularly in my school and school district. The journey would not have been possible without the variety of interactions that gave me cause for reflection and scholarly engagement.

To my loving and supportive husband, Clement Lambert who stood by me throughout the entire process. I thank him for being a source of my inspiration and believing in me. Our hearty and constant conversations have enriched my personal and professional life. This journey would not have been the same if he were not a part of it.

To my three precious children Deaja-Marie, Taylor-Jade, and Karim-Jabari, I thank them for the motivation and for keeping me grounded and energized by their presence, interaction and just enjoying the wonder of witnessing their growth and development.

My parents Charles and Claudette Fletcher and siblings Charmaine, Denise, Claude and Craig deserve accolades for defining my family roots and for the various levels of support they provided while I studied through visits, conversations, and encouragement. My friend Nadine Logan-Ashley who I choose to call family also deserves my gratitude for her support over the years. I am also thankful for the support provided members of my husband's family especially Dr. Constance Mussa and Leonora Lambert.

I give thanks to my paternal cousin Deon Hemmings for being a role model, trendsetter, and supporter in terms of family achievement. My maternal cousin Paula Gordon deserves gratitude for offering me a home away from home in the Carolinas.

I am grateful to God for his mercies and blessings toward me as well as the churches I attended in South Carolina that generously opened their doors to my family and me.

To others whom I have not mentioned by name who may have contributed to my journey, I am forever grateful.

## **ABSTRACT**

The study explores the experiences of four first-year Jamaican immigrant teachers in rural southern South Carolina regarding their descriptions of the experiences and the researcher's observations. The main research question was concerned with first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers' experiences as they navigate the curriculum landscape in South Carolina. The inquiry engages a qualitative research design.

Interviews, observations, and artifacts were engaged to collect data. These data were analyzed deductively and inductively through a process of content analysis. These data findings in the study covered four dominant themes these included immigrant teachers' strengths, challenges, changes, and navigation strategies. The data revealed that the teaching experiences of the participants manifested both strengths and challenges in their current assignment as immigrant teachers. Challenges included personal and professional conundrums which ranged from financial to dealing with stereotypes from a rural southern American community. Teaching strategies engaged by selected participants and their ability to use their home culture to enhance instruction as well as broaden the world-view of their students were dominant strengths. Curriculum practices, as well as the formation of new alliances with members of the host country, provided noteworthy examples of changes.

The study explored and identified parallels with various theoretical perspectives including the critical race theory, theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, acculturation

theory and fictive kin network. The study also includes Implications for policymakers, school districts, and immigrant teachers.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Dedication .....                                     | iii |
| Acknowledgements .....                               | iv  |
| Abstract .....                                       | vi  |
| Chapter 1- Introduction .....                        | 1   |
| Problem Statement .....                              | 2   |
| Research Questions .....                             | 6   |
| Statement of Purpose .....                           | 7   |
| Definitions of terms .....                           | 7   |
| Rationale for the Study .....                        | 8   |
| Theoretical Framework .....                          | 10  |
| Information Literature .....                         | 21  |
| Chapter Summary and Overall Report Structure .....   | 28  |
| Chapter 2 - Literature Review .....                  | 30  |
| Introduction .....                                   | 30  |
| Gaps in the Studies of Immigrant Teachers .....      | 30  |
| Reasons for Teacher Migration .....                  | 31  |
| Contributions of Immigrant Teachers .....            | 32  |
| Integration of Immigrant Teacher .....               | 33  |
| Challenges for Immigrant Teachers .....              | 34  |
| Professional Experiences of immigrant teachers ..... | 38  |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Immigrant Teachers' Support .....                            | 39  |
| Immigrant Teachers' Response to diversity .....              | 42  |
| The Immigrant Teacher and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy ..... | 43  |
| Conclusion .....   | 44  |
| Chapter 3-Research Methodology .....                         | 46  |
| Research Design.....   | 46  |
| Data Collection and Description of Data Sources .....        | 47  |
| Participants Selection.....                                  | 52  |
| Research Site.....   | 55  |
| Data Analysis .....  | 57  |
| Ethical Considerations .....                                 | 59  |
| Trustworthiness.....   | 60  |
| Methodology Justification .....                              | 61  |
| Area of Specialization.....                                  | 63  |
| My Story .....   | 64  |
| Research Timeline .....                                      | 76  |
| Summary .....  | 77  |
| Chapter 4- Research Findings.....                            | 78  |
| Introduction.....  | 78  |
| Participants' Narratives.....                                | 79  |
| Summary of Findings.....                                     | 130 |
| Conclusion .....   | 137 |
| Chapter 5 -Summary and Discussion.....                       | 138 |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction.....  | 138 |
| Purpose of the Study and research questions.....                       | 138 |
| Methodology Summary .....  | 139 |
| Summary of theory .....  | 139 |
| Interpretation of results .....  | 141 |
| Limitations of the study .....   | 151 |
| Implication of the findings.....                                       | 153 |
| Methodological Limitations.....  | 155 |
| Implications for research.....   | 155 |
| Implications of the Findings for Practice.....                         | 156 |
| Recommendations.....   | 157 |
| Suggestions for future research.....                                   | 159 |
| Conclusion .....   | 160 |
| References.....  | 161 |
| Appendix A, Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Notice .....     | 172 |
| Appendix B, Request for Permission to Conduct Research in School ..... | 174 |
| Appendix C, Classroom Observation Document.....                        | 175 |
| Appendix D, Interview Questions .....                                  | 176 |
| Appendix E, Letter of Invitation to Participants.....                  | 177 |
| Appendix F, Consent Form .....   | 179 |

## CHAPTER 1

### **Introduction**

The protracted shortage of teachers has amplified the education debates of the past two decades. There is inconsistency in the reports about the nature and significance of teacher shortage in both developed and developing nations. America, for example, has one-third of its new teacher population leaving the profession after three years and almost a half exit the system after five years (Iruka, and Carver, 2006). Studies conducted by commissioned agencies and scholars show that teacher attrition is most rapid in the poorest areas of the United States. Therefore, many schools located in these areas experience severe teacher shortages. The retirement in masses of many baby boomer teachers and demands presented by the federal legislation No Child Left Behind Act has exacerbated the situation. There is a proportionate increase of immigrant teachers arriving on the shores of the USA to the severe shortages of classroom teachers. Teacher shortage and migration inadvertently result in cross-cultural experiences for students, staff and the wider school community. This experience can prove beneficial in a more globalized and digitized world. According to Borman and Dowling, (2008) high poverty schools will have the greatest need for teachers, along with select core subjects, such as math, science and special education. Consequently, the researchers concluded that schools with the greatest need for teachers would also find that the labor pool of available teacher candidates will not be representative of the diversity of the student body or the communities to be served.

Therefore, several teachers leave their countries to work in different parts of the United States. In several instances, they gain tremendously from that experience, but at other times they are bombarded with issues they are unable to overcome, or it may take months to do so. Scholars of teacher migration (e.g., Quirocho & Rios, 2000, Milner, 2003, Oloo, 2012 and Caravatti and Lederer, 2014) have advanced numerous arguments pointing to reasons for employing immigrant teachers. Among the reasons are unique perspectives they bring to the classroom due to their personal experiences with diversity-related issues, their in-depth knowledge of diverse needs of students and their ability to serve as role models, mentors, and advocates for children.

### **Problem Statement**

Nearly ten years ago, I arrived in the United States as a teacher with over seven years' experience in the classroom. I was placed in a fifth-grade classroom to teach all subject areas. While I had, experience teaching in my country (Jamaica), my experience was different from what I would come to see in a rural school district in South Carolina. Even though I was placed with a mentor teacher most of our dialogue was focused on discussing matters that were more personal in nature. These conversations had little or no bearing on school or instructional practices. Secondly, the mentor teacher spent most of her time asking questions about my culture and did not seem to have much to share about hers.

While I was aware that I could have been provided more assistance in different areas of the curriculum by a teacher more steeped in the American curriculum culture, this was not so. This veteran teacher who was my mentor taught next door to me had been a member of the profession for more than 25 years. She had been in the same

district nearly that long. Students loved her class, she connected with them and was knowledgeable on strategies that worked for her students. All her students' parents were involved in their education. She knew them by name. Even though she achieved this synergy through her years of service, I wished that one day she would help me make my transition into the school seamless and more successful. This smooth transition, I hoped, would be done through her helping me with age-appropriate pedagogy, classroom control and just simple strategies to get parents involved.

Despite the absence of a more helpful mentor teacher, as the years progressed I became more au fait with the culture and the curriculum of my school. For successive years, my students' scores and gains topped others in my school district. I found that parents were now trying to get their children to come to my class. In retrospect, no immigrant teachers in my setting should experience the initial feelings of uncertainty and frustration that I experienced when I entered the teaching profession in a new country.

At the beginning of the 2016 school year, four new immigrant teachers came to our rural school in South Carolina. They were hired due to the inability of the school district to employ teachers in the United States who are willing to work in a rural area school. Therefore, the school requested the help of an international teacher recruitment agency called Educational Partners International (EPI). This company specialized in recruiting teachers from different countries to work as cultural exchange teachers on a special visa called a J1 visa.

The teachers arrived a few days before the school year started which is typical for an immigrant teacher. During those days, they had to attend workshops, new teachers' orientation sessions, and seminars. A mentor teacher, who was expected to provide

support was assigned to each immigrant teacher. Despite the provision of mentor teachers, these teachers' frustrations were evident in their utterances, classroom interaction, and demeanor as they navigated the unfamiliar cultural and pedagogical terrain.

The identified problem of practice for the present research study involves four immigrant teachers from Jamaica. The study explored the experiences of immigrant teachers to the United States and how they fared in their general professional settings.

A recent encounter with the vantage point of a first-year immigrant teacher vivifies the situation as she stated:

When you don't know you just don't know. One of the worst feelings one could have is to have their knowledge or lack thereof of their profession challenged or questioned by one self. These two weeks have taught me that I do not know as much as I thought. As a matter of fact, I have come to accept the fact that I am a brand-new teacher. After fifteen years of teaching and being in control of my teaching/ learning environment I honestly thought I was proficient. These two weeks have proven otherwise. Not only do I feel incompetent.... but I feel so retarded. It's like I am "professionally dyslexic." Now...I have a month to get it together. How does one move from retarded to proficient in one month for evaluation?

Secondly, based on informal observations of these four teachers I have realized that some essential components of teaching in a South Carolina context are missing. These teachers constantly complained of their limited ability to create lesson plans by integrating all the components required by the district. They stated that in Jamaica they

were not required to teach English Language Arts (ELA) as a separate area. Instead, all areas are integrated, making lesson planning and resource selection a little easier. Now they were given the task of creating lesson plans for discrete disciplines which they found to be quite onerous.

In the early part of the school year, an administrator presented the student performance data from the previous year. The meeting consisted of six teachers with one being a first-year Jamaican immigrant teacher, about halfway through the presentation she raised her hand and told the administrator that this would make more sense if she knew what MAP, TE21, gradual release, and high average meant. The administrator told her not to worry as she would get it as we moved further in the year. After a few more minutes she again raised her hand and asked for the meaning of MAP, the administrator replied, “girl, don’t let me lie to you.”

One of the teachers whose classroom was next to me had severe classroom management issues, her students never seemed to stop talking in disruptive ways and classroom management strategies that she had applied in her Jamaican context did not seem to work. I was summoned several times to help the new migrant teachers with classroom behavior management, computer issues and teaching strategies and lesson delivery

I communicated with the principal and literacy coach and found out that even though these teachers possessed strengths in some areas, they experienced curriculum-based challenges. It is within the backdrop of these new immigrant teachers’ curriculum implementation challenges and strengths that this study was conceptualized. It covers a



unique and underexplored area. This research venture, I thought, would provide insights into important educational issues within the North American education landscape.

Despite the expanding research literature on diversity in the United States, the experiences of first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers are underrepresented. Documenting how these teachers negotiate these experiences are important to make sense of the context and issues they find themselves in and how they deal with these issues.

### **Research Questions**

The overarching research question that guided the inquiry is as follows: What are Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers' experiences as they navigate the educational landscape in South Eastern South Carolina?

The sub-questions were:

- (1) What are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths that first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers bring with them?
- (2) How do first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe the challenges and navigational strategies they use in their school?
- (3) What personal or professional changes do these first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers encounter during their time in southeastern South Carolina?

## **Statement of Purpose**

When teachers migrate to the United States and begin new jobs, they are expected to recalibrate many aspects of their teaching to fit their new environment. Therefore, the focus of the research is on “Immigrant Teachers’ and their perspectives on curriculum processes.”

Qualitative studies have been conducted involving immigrant populations, such as immigrant students and immigrant domestic workers (e.g., Eggerth, DeLaney, Marks, & Apavaloiae, 2012). Studies on immigrant teachers are mainly located in countries outside the United States. According to Elbaz-Luwisch (2004), “stories of teaching in a new culture are rare in the literature on teaching, perhaps because the phenomenon itself tends to go against the grain...” (p.389). By exploring the experiences of selected migrant teachers, I hope to highlight dominant issues surrounding migrant teachers and curriculum concerns. By ventilating the perspectives and practices of a select group of migrant teachers about their curriculum experiences, I hope to provide a unique avenue for scholarly attention to this neglected area. The purpose of this study is to examine the curriculum perspectives and experiences of Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers and how they respond to a new environment.

## **Definition of terms**

To help the reader understand key terms within this study, I provide meanings of these words as I have endorsed or interpreted them for the purpose of this study:

**Acculturation.** Refers to the adjustment process experienced by an individual or group when settling into a new culture.

**Curriculum.** Anything and everything that occurs in a classroom including the lesson (planned or otherwise).

**H-1B visa** is a temporary working visa for foreign nationals who are members of a "specialty occupation."

**Immigrant teachers** as defined in this study encompass teachers of non-American origin and professional preparation who joined the United States teaching force. Normally, these teachers hold teaching credentials from their home countries. However, work on an international certification they receive when they enter the United States.

**American-based School** is a school that primarily serves students residing in an international country other than their own along with those affluent students from that country. These schools generally follow a foreign curriculum coupled with aspects of the host country's curriculum. The teaching staff is usually made up of administrators and teachers from the foreign country.

**Immigrant teachers Experience-** The total teaching experience which the immigrant teachers which include those gained in their home country and those in the United States.

**J-1 visa** is a non-immigrant visa issued by the United States to teachers from other countries to participate in programs that promote cultural exchange.

### **Rationale for the Study**

This study was undertaken to make sense of and document the experiences of selected immigrant teachers in the United States specifically in a southeastern state. Through the provision of thick, rich descriptions, the study highlights the typicality of

experiences which auger well for transferability to other instructional contexts.

Immigrant teachers are a growing and integral part of the educational landscape in the United States. Therefore, it is necessary to expand scholarly inquiry that explores the experiences of this segment of the teaching force.

Therefore, the work should prove beneficial to the following groups (a) immigrant teachers; (b) school and district administrators; (c) faculty and staff, students and parents who work with immigrant teachers. (e) education policymakers (f) curriculum planners

For immigrant teachers, this study highlights the experiences of persons with similar experiences. The commonalities described might resonate with their experiences and they might also learn from the dissonances in experiences. It should also help them to identify some areas of strength that they bring with them and how they use them as a means of professional advancement. In addition, it informs some efforts in affected schools to overcome obstacles and help to make the immigrating experience more successful.

This study should also be beneficial to faculty and staff members who are coworkers of immigrant teachers. By reading this report, they should purposefully understand the lives of immigrant teachers and realize that they are professionals of different nationalities who add other dimensions of diversity within the classroom and other professional settings.

Parents of the children taught by immigrant teachers who become exposed to this research report should also benefit. As they enroll their children in institutions with immigrant teachers, they want to know both the professional and cultural credentials of their children's teacher. This knowledge should help them to determine whether these

teachers can engage their students on the journey to become life-long learners. This study should help to inform them as they should gain greater insights into the immigrant teachers' personal and professional landscape. Such insights might create greater tolerance [or intolerance] and appreciation for the differences among teachers of diverse national origins.

This study is important to policymakers as they can use the information to create conditions that support effective teaching and address the changing expectations for learning. This study should also help them to identify areas that are challenging to the immigrant teacher and the strengths that they bring with them. The insights should enable them to create situations that can help their American hosts to capitalize on these immigrant teacher's classroom practices and ideas.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The graphic presented in figure 1.1 illustrates the theoretical convergences that underpin the current inquiry. It demonstrates the interplay of four major theoretical perspectives critical race theory, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, acculturation theory, and fictive kin network. According to Brettell (2008) in studying migration, one will find that information has been dispersed into various disciplines and will lack a single unifying paradigm. Accordingly, my theoretical framework is informed by four quadrants of theoretical viewpoints with arrows demonstrating the recursive relationships between each perspective. Emerging from these viewpoints is a new theoretical construct that I have named "Immigrant teacher pedagogy." I explored the viability of such a construct during the research process.

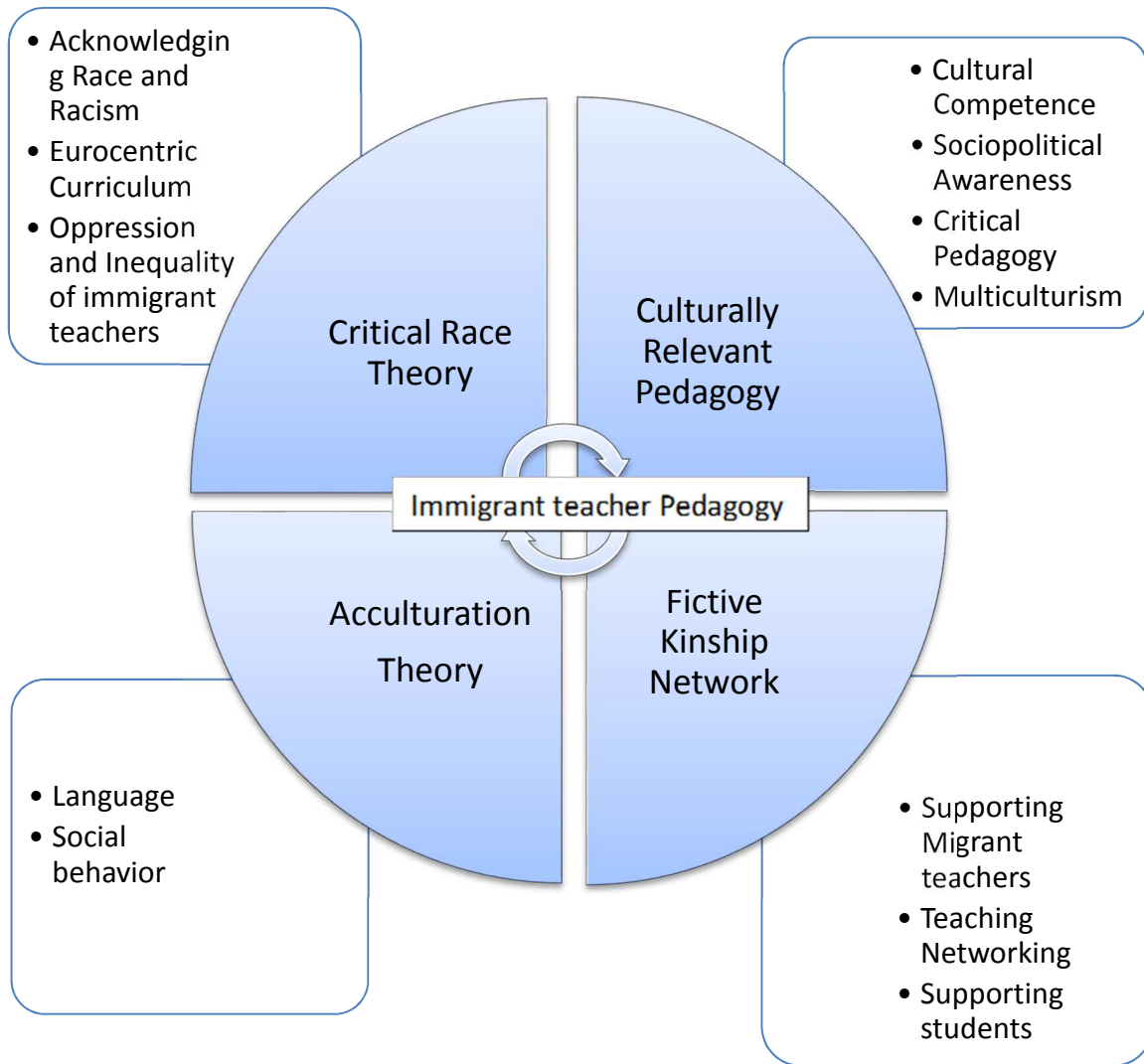


Figure 1.1. Chart illustrating the theoretical framework. This figure illustrates the theoretical connection.

To create this frame, I specifically looked at the ways the literature discusses the education of American diverse student population by immigrant teachers, using multicultural education and critical pedagogy, with these being a rapidly expanding intersection. I also look at the how the literature discusses the immigrant teachers. This

frame was decided upon after looking at the various how Critical Race theory has intersected with the ideas of culturally relevant pedagogy, Fictive Kin Network and Acculturation Theory. These areas share many similarities. I also looked at how the culture of the United States helps to shape the immigrant teacher through changing their identity and the forming of fictive kinship relationships.

**Critical Race Theory.** In this discourse, it is essential that I embrace a theory that helps me to derive plausible responses to the question of the challenges immigrant teachers face and the roles cultural competency and race play for these immigrant teachers as they educate our students in South Carolina. Therefore, critical race theory is one theory forms a part of the quadrant of theories I have applied to the current theoretical frame. Critical Race Theory, which is defined as “a framework that can be used to theorize, examine and challenge the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact on social structures, practices, and discourses” (Yosso, 2005, p. 70). Race and racism are prevalent in American society. Consequently, they will be manifested in institutional and structural policies that continue to keep African American and other minorities oppressed (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Immigrant teachers, like all other teachers, are expected to manifest awareness of race and culture to the students they teach. However, the racial and cultural messages must conform to that of the dominant society. Because the immigrant teacher is from outside the United States (s)he is often challenged to educate students using the embedded ideals of the curriculum. Ladson-Billings (1995) explained that critical race theory sees the official school curriculum as a culturally specific artifact designed to maintain a White supremacist master script. This type of curriculum materially benefits the white elite and psychically benefits white

working-class people who want to maintain the status quo, as they will no longer benefit if it is dismantled (Lynn & Parker, 2006). Therefore, the Eurocentric ideals of the curriculum are upheld, and immigrant teachers are required to teach it without any modifications. This idea has enabled the immigrant teachers to be the right fit for the classroom as they are aware of the cultural knowledge of the dominant society since they were both educated using the Eurocentric ideals and trained using the ideals of the Eurocentric curriculum.

These traditional pedagogies put forward in the curriculum often marginalize students based on race, class, gender, language, accent, phenotype, or immigrant status and distort African American and Asian American knowledge and experiences. Some curriculum areas are not set out with intent to marginalize. However, these students interpret them as such. Ladson-Billings (2013), stated that the hidden curriculum works along with the official curriculum to reinforce each other. For example, African American students may see people who look like them occupying the positions of janitors and cafeteria workers while administrators and teachers are White.

These immigrant teachers are from a society where they experience oppression like that received by the African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and other minority groups and are able to utilize one tenet of critical race theory known as counter-stories. Counter-storytelling is a structure that legitimizes the racial and subservient experiences of ostracized groups (Parker & Villalpando, 2007, Ladson-Billings, 2009). Based on this it is evident that counter-stories will expose and critique the dominant Eurocentric ideology and give students a voice to tell their narratives involving marginalized experiences.



Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) described CRT as a response to the under-theorization of race and racism in education. Adding to this Solórzano and Yosso (2002) assert that CRT “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education by examining how educational theory and practice are used to subordinate particular racial and ethnic groups” (p. 2). Schramm-Pate (2014) spoke on this issue when she states, “issues of ‘difference’ are constantly being raised in schooling” (pg.1). Therefore, the immigrant teacher who may not have the necessary skills and knowledge of dealing with these issues as their previous context may not require this may resort to the idea of “colorblindness.” CRT speaks against liberal ideology such as colorblindness. We must start the conversation very early since dismantling racism, discrimination, and unlearning information we have embedded in our minds is a lifelong journey.

According to Frye (1983), oppression has been defined as "an enclosing structure of forces and barriers that tend to immobilize and reduce a group or category of people" (p. 11). It is the popular belief that oppression involves “racial discrimination” which includes treating people differently by their race. However, there is a range of specific practices which may be noticed by the immigrant teachers such as employers promoting someone based on their race and migratory status. According to Lefever, Paavola, Berman, Guojonsdottir, Talib, and Gisladdottir (2014), “This ‘racism without races’ . . . involves discrimination where . . . [a] person is not seen as an individual but as a representative of a culture” (p. 74).

Often this kind of private discrimination is difficult to detect because it occurs informally, behind the scene in the inter-personal encounters and decisions made in everyday life. Even though these behaviors are illegal, it is very hard to detect. Hence,

making reporting and speaking up against these private acts of discrimination almost impossible. While critical race theory does not speak to undermining and oppressing immigrants it does speak to this oppression in minority groups.

**Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.** In working on this discourse, I needed to answer the questions of how the immigrant teachers engage students and sharpen their pedagogical skills. I engaged the idea of Ladson-Billings (1995), to answer this since she prioritizes teacher posture or identities and behaviors used to support Black students and paradigms or pedagogical frames of reference used to teach them. Other culturally responsive conceptions focus on teacher practices or instructional strategies used to facilitate teaching and learning. The idea that it focuses on pedagogy as well as teachers' identities is a perfect fit because immigrant teacher pedagogy is at the forefront of this study.

The curriculum is the key reference point for some teachers, particularly teachers from third world countries (UNESCO 2005). It should be noted that the teachers in this study are all from a third world country. The curriculum is the official textbook and teacher guides, often the sole resource used by these teachers. Teachers' pedagogic approaches, strategies, and practices thus serve to enact the curriculum. Entering a diverse country like the United States, one must be prepared to make the necessary adjustments by constructing pedagogical practices that have relevance and meaning to students' social and cultural context. Marx and Larson (2012) conducted a study where they implemented curriculum improvements for Latino students in Larson's school. The educators in this school were asked to implement culturally responsive practices that address the needs of Latino students. Since principal Larson and his staff were all white

and of a different cultural background, they found these expectation as “vague, hard to achieve radical, inappropriate . . . a threat to the core curriculum and contrary to the assimilationist climate of the school” (p. 293).

Ladson-Billings (2009) proposed that African Americans children should develop an appreciation for their own culture and at least one other culture. She refers to them as being “culturally competent.” Like Billings (2009), Banks (2003) stated that regardless of students’ race, ethnicity, or social class, they should study about the cogent and complex roles of ethnicity and cross-ethnic relationships and interactions in U.S. society and culture” (p. 14). Immigrant teachers bring with them a range of cultural knowledge, experience, and skills that can be shared with their American counterparts and students. Therefore, they could be placed more strategically to enhance the learning of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This would fulfill host institution’s stated mission globalize their pedagogy and curriculum for all their students. These immigrant teachers must work to instill pride in students whose cultures deviate from the mainstream dominant cultural group, that is Anglo, native English-speakers and teach students to use new understanding gained from non-mainstream persons who share similar culture to them.

Nieto and Bode (2012) stated that teachers seldom have the knowledge base required to deal with diverse students. To further concretized this argument Cummins, (2010) stated schools are often not ready for the growing student diversity and lack cultural and educational materials to support culturally and linguistically diverse students. A critical approach to education highlights the importance of having learners engaged in their learning process and being able to find and develop their opinions and positions

(Freire, 2005). However, Freire (1970) in his seminal work explained that curriculum delivery that exists in schools could be aptly described as “banking education.” He identifies this as “an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize and repeat” (p. 72). He proffered that “banking education” allows the oppressors to maintain the status quo which is a system that continues to oppress.

Multicultural teaching is not based on a set curriculum but perspectives and practices that embody “tolerance, acceptance, respect, affirmation, solidarity and critical thinking.” Students need to be exposed to this kind of teaching, since as they age they form and develop opinions which influence their sense of fairness and justice. Banks (2006) argued that a multicultural curriculum that reflects the cultures, values, and goals of the groups within a nation will “contribute significantly to the development of a healthy nationalism and national identity” (p. 8).

Developing a school culture which values cultural diversity is important for ensuring healthy relationships and an environment conducive to learning. Issues of identity are critical for students. Therefore, they need to affirm group identities and explore their identity as members of society. Ladson-Billings (2014), indicated that classroom teachers with a multicultural purview recognize, understand, value, and incorporate the cultural diversity of their students. Therefore, the immigrant teacher would be one to provide the multicultural education which is needed to be taught to these students. Instead of students developing a fear or discomfort because of the unknown, children will recognize differences in a more positive way because they have the tools

and the knowledge to help them understand others. Banks (2003) argued that only through a transformation of the curriculum will the goal of creating a genuinely multicultural curriculum be achieved.

**Fictive Kinship.** To address my question of professional and personal change, the immigrant teachers undergo during their time in the United States; I looked to the idea of Fictive Kinship. The migration of teachers to the United States causes a change from the extended family structures they are accustomed to being a member of in their home countries. This change causes them to adopt new family members in their new locale. Oswald, (2002) and Weston (1991) described this meaningful and supportive relationship that exists among immigrant groups due to the lack of “blood relatives.” They emphasize the idea that the immigrants expand the family boundaries by including “nonkin” as part of their family, which was suggested as a potential adaptive strategy (e.g., near neighbors, classroom teachers, and administrators). While Cook (2010) did not speak to fictive kin in immigrant families, she contends that fictive kin relationships were established to provide social, economic and psychological support to Black families during hardships because of poverty and racism. Within the immigrant teacher group, the kinship in school generally worked by helping these teachers build a network of collaboration and cooperation generally with other staff members. These members were either Americans or those immigrants who migrated before them and have found a niche in the United States. In most occasions, they even assumed family like roles and functions. They shared personal stories from which they drew to inform their pedagogical practices and to build resilience and confidence in their Black students (Cook, 2010). These stories were interwoven throughout the curriculum (Cook, 2010).

Fictive relationships serve to broaden reciprocated support networks, hence creating a sense of community and enhance social control with immigrant teachers and other immigrants as well as natives. The notion of fictive kin denotes the binding of ostentatious social networks and regularizing of interactions with people who are otherwise outside the boundaries of the family network. Unlike true family bonds, fictive kinship is generally a voluntary effort and require the agreement of both parties in establishing this type of bond. Fordham 1986; Johnson and Barer 1990, provided work on fictive kin that covers the importance of this unit in U.S. African-American urban communities and their effects on everything from child care to educational achievement. Johnson and Barer (1990) referred to this as “other mothering” where people in the community are experiencing similar problems and collective action may be the only method that can remedy them. Some researchers have even described ethnicity as being an elaborated form of fictive kinship (Yelvington & Bentley 1991).

**Acculturation Theory.** According to a sociocultural perspective, identity is socially constructed and reflects the social, historical, and political contexts of an individual’s lived experiences (Hall, 2002). This argument was further emphasized by Holland and Lachicotte (2007) who stated that “Identities are social and cultural products through which a person identifies the self-in-activity and learns, through the mediation of cultural resources, to manage and organize himself or herself to act in the name of an identity” (p.114). Cummins (2010) contends that transitioning from one country to another that differ in sociopolitical and cultural contexts often “minoritize” the newcomers and expose them to discrimination by language among other identifiers. The

acculturation theory helped me answer the question of strategies the immigrant teachers use to help them survive in the United States.

According to Marden & Meyer (1968) acculturation is “the change in individuals whose primary learning has been in one culture and who take over traits from another culture” (p. 36). the incorporation of “Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (p. 104)

The term acculturation is not new and has been around since 1914 when Robert Parks drew on the ecological framework to create a three-stage model which highlighted contact, accommodation, and assimilation. He went further in stating that people of diverse cultures and languages undergo these different phases when they encounter persons from another culture. Within his theory, he also looked at the fact that as immigrants learned to accommodate the dominant culture, a process of cultural assimilation ensued culminating in intermarriage and amalgamation. Parks examined how the process of acculturation led to cultural assimilation stating that it is “progressive” and “irreversible” and contributed to the ethos of America as a country of immigrants. Berry (1980) added two other components, rejection and enculturation, which are directly related to my research. These would be evident as immigrant teachers move back and forth as it relates to their dominant group. Berry’s model also addressed the critical roles of minorities, groups and societies that were multicultural in nature. The individuals could determine their level of engagement in the acculturation process was a noteworthy

feature of the model. An important feature of the model was the incorporation of language emanating from the ethnic revival movement.

The language component plays a key role for immigrant teachers in their daily practices of teaching. They constantly use language as a tool to teach and communicate with students, Americans and other immigrant teachers and parents. This constant communication has caused the immigrant teachers to create a new identity.

### **Information Literature**

To get a better understanding of the immigrant teacher, it is important that I present a coherent profile of this group. First, since the immigrant teachers are international immigrants, the historical context of immigration should be addressed. Second, since policies impact the number of immigrant teachers coming into the United States, issues such as policies and practices and the migration of teachers should be looked at and the reasons for teacher migration from other countries into the United States. Finally, I should look at international teacher recruitment programs.

**Historical Context.** Research has explored migration in the Caribbean from Jamaica (Thomas-Hope, 2004 and Mishra, 2006). They have mentioned the benefits and pitfalls of migration. The earliest immigration workers came to the United States as guest workers. In the early 1940s, for example, Jamaican immigrant men went to work in northern communities from Iowa to Connecticut as farm workers (Hahamovitch, 2011). Jamaican immigration to the United States was at its peak post-1965 and has continued to the present day. The Hart Celler Act, however, had a huge impact on the number of immigrants allowed into the United States, as a quota was placed on all forms of people wanting to migrate except for those people who migrated because of family sponsorship. Over the years, more than 50 percent of all immigrants from Jamaica



to the United States were women and they generally fall within the age range 18-44 years old. Most of these female immigrants were nurses and teachers, they migrated to the United States since it offered better opportunities than their home country Jamaica (Thomas-Hope, 2004). Jamaicans have been perceived in some circles as having a tradition of hard work and respect for education.

**The United States.** The United States is overwhelmingly a nation of immigrants and their descendants, making immigration an issue happening for centuries. Many immigrants to the United States saw their initial move to the “new world” as temporary, lasting but a few years. They hoped to find work, become financially stable and then return to their homeland. U.S. immigration law has been used as a tool to legally exclude and marginalize immigrants and people of color. For example, the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, Mexican repatriation and deportation programs beginning in the 1930s and Japanese Internment in the 1940s were government regulated laws established to exclude Asian and Mexican immigrants, but also U.S. born Asian-Americans and Chicanas/os who were perceived to be immigrants. In the current historical moment, racist nativism continues to exclude Latinas/os who are perceived to be undocumented Mexican immigrants. While many people returned to their homeland in the 50s and 60s, most stayed and became Americans. Before 1920, about 30 percent of all immigrants to the United States later returned to their native country. In 1965, when the United States revised its immigration laws, possibilities were opened for millions of new immigrants to enter the country (Bean, Vernez & Keely, 1989). These possibilities have led to immigrants in tens of thousands from the Caribbean, South and Central America, West Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia. These people seek work and economic, political and

religious freedom. Despite hostility that has often greeted them, many have decided to stay and become United States Citizens. Today, about 15 percent return home. Some immigrants intend to stay in a new country temporarily and then go back home. Others go back shortly after migrating because they experience difficulty adjusting to a new society. These phenomena transcend all working-class groups. Therefore, teachers are no exception.

**Teacher Migration from Jamaica.** Migration from Jamaica is not new; people have been migrating from the island to the United States in large numbers since 1970. Scholarly research has found that since 1970, about 814,106 Jamaicans have migrated from a small population of 2.7 million people (Thomas-Hope 2004). Even though the negative impacts on the country's economy and education system are far-reaching the positives are undeniable. For example, in 2004, Jamaica received US\$1.4 billion in remittances from migrants living and working overseas. This figure does not include the money sent back to the island informally through family and friends. Even though this is so, the recent concern of loss of labor, particularly in the teaching profession, is a cause for concern. Many television and radio features have bemoaned the negative impact of teachers leaving Jamaica, especially science and math teachers. The General Secretary of the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA), Byron Farquharson, in a newspaper interview, stated that the "government needs to put measures in place to ensure that schools are not adversely affected by the migration of teachers." He highlighted the fact that it is impossible for the government to match the salaries of teachers who enter the United States through international recruiters. These salaries can range from US forty thousand to sixty thousand dollars a year the equivalent of J\$4 and J\$8 million a year. In Jamaica,

however, a teacher's salary will range from Jamaican one hundred thousand dollars per month to one hundred and fifty thousand per month which is the US equivalent of one thousand to one thousand five hundred per month. He was however optimistic that they would "return and contribute to Jamaica's education system after they have achieved financial stability." Even though Byron Farquharson stated that these teachers would return to contribute to the country, the trend that this country has seen is that these teachers generally proceeded to get a green card that afforded them permanent residence status in the United States. (Loop News, 2016)

Jamaica's education system is severely affected when it loses high schools Science and Math teachers. According to Loop News (2016) former minister of education of Jamaica Ronald Thwaites stated that 494 Mathematics and Science teachers left the education system of Jamaica in 2015. The concern was also that teachers sometimes left the country without providing adequate notice. Therefore, often schools learn that their teachers have migrated at the start of the school term. This massive migration provides difficulty in identifying suitable candidates to replace these teachers. Even though this Caribbean island like many others has set up plans to combat the massive teacher exodus, the situation has remained unchanged for over ten years. For example, in April 2002, the CARICOM Council on Human and Social Development (COHSOD) agreed to work on the "development of a strategy for 'managed migration' with the training of professionals for export on a rotation basis." (Stabroek News, April 20, 2002). To date, this is still written as a plan and no action has been taken. Other Developing countries such as the Philippines have instituted regulations which address their teacher migration dilemma (Agunias, 2008).

**Policies and Practices on Immigrant Teachers.** International immigration has resulted in a growing number of educated professionals moving to other countries (Iredale, 2001). This is particularly the case in the United States, where changes in immigration policy in recent years have placed emphasis on attracting skilled workers from other countries. For example, H1B work visa program could only provide work visa to 55,000 international persons including teachers, however, the policy has changed to provide 65,000 H1B Visa, this increased quota has encouraged more teachers from other countries to apply for teaching positions in the United States. Wolfe (2007) estimated that 14,000 teachers are now teaching in U.S. public schools through the H-1B and J-1 nonimmigrant visa programs. The American Federation for Teachers (AFT) had similar findings stating that 13,000 teachers were working in the United States on temporary visas in 2002. However, between 2002 and 2008, public schools in the United States sought to employ 91,126 teachers with labor shortage visas (H1Bs). Other teachers enter the United States on a three-year J-1 visa, which is designated for cross-cultural and educational exchange opportunities. According to Manik (2005), some developed countries' (such as the UK and US) desire to address their critical needs such as a lack of teachers has changed their immigration policies and has adopted some innovative strategies to attract and retain teachers from abroad.

Policies have also changed in some developing countries that have been the source of teachers who migrate developed countries. For example, in the year 2001, almost 500 educators left Jamaica to accept temporary assignments abroad. The prime minister of Jamaica proposed creating a lucrative business by training teachers who

would then migrate to the United States and the United Kingdom. These countries would pay a fee for in exchange for the teachers they recruit.

One Caribbean country, Barbados has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Jefferson County Public Schools' Board of Education (JCPS) in Louisville, Kentucky. Within this memorandum, they have highlighted specific categories of teachers who would be ineligible to migrate. Their Ministry of Education also emphasized for research into this area citing the lack of empirical knowledge on the phenomenon as the main reason. Subsequently, a study entitled "Teacher Mobility, 'Brain Drain', Labor Markets and Educational Resources in the Commonwealth" was conducted by the Commonwealth in conjunction with the University of the West Indies. The context of teacher loss and mobility were investigated (Ochs, 2003). In this research, the readers are provided with insights into the phenomenon of teacher migration. The study also highlights the dilemma of smaller countries that are experiencing teaching attrition including those in the Caribbean.

**International Teacher Recruitment Programs.** Like many other state departments of Education in the United States, the state of South Carolina has adopted an initiative for the recruitment of immigrant teachers. This was necessitated by the shortage of teachers in the state. Many international recruiting agents do exist in South Carolina who offers J1 visa to international teachers to teach in the state these are namely Educational Partners International, LLC (EPI), Foreign Academic and Cultural Exchange Services (FACES) and participate among others. The J1 visas generally last for three years with provision for an extension of two years. The J-1 visa is meant to facilitate cultural exchange between the immigrant teachers and the students.

The international teacher recruitment agencies generally place advertisement on websites or through the media in the source countries. Teachers are advised to apply through the respective website of these agencies. The first step requires teachers to complete a form asking questions such as number of years of service and the type of degree. Some recruiting website provides information which when immigrant teacher compares to their home country would provide a pull factor such as the following; “100% of EPI teachers are paid on the same salary scale as US teachers. J-1 Teachers with EPI make a monthly salary (12 months) between \$2,916 and \$5,416 before taxes and withholdings. Salary is based on experience and placement location.”

The prospects of earning more lures teachers into applying through these agencies. A Jamaican immigrant teacher would find a salary of US \$2,916 very attractive since a regular classroom teacher in that country would earn an average salary of US \$1,000 dollars per month. Additionally, while fine print states that the stated salary is subject to taxes and fees an immigrant teacher would not be aware of what that amounts to. Upon receiving their first salary teachers often become disappointed since their net income in the United states is much less than the gross income stated in the recruitment agencies’ documentation.

To be selected for a teaching job under exchange visitor programs, the international recruiting agents perform a pre-screening interview. Shortlisted teachers engage in the second line of interview with their assigned school district. The school district generally pays a fee to the recruiting agent for the teachers hired. These teachers access a relocation loan which they generally use to contribute to their relocation expenses (e.g., making the first down payment on their car). Because these teachers are

arriving in these rural parts of South Carolina they must pay for and insure a car before they can leave the hotel where they stay for orientation activities during the first few days of entering the United States. While these teachers are directly employed by the school district the recruitment company has the right to terminate their visa at any time if they oppose any rules or regulations stipulated in the company's manual. It should be noted that any termination of the immigrant teachers' visa would also lead to an automatic termination by the school district. These logistical details are important in providing a coherent picture of the teacher migration process and the circumstances that surround the migrant teachers selected for my research.

### **Chapter Summary and Overall Report Structure**

Chapter one of my research report provided information on the background, context, purpose and guiding questions. This chapter also outlined the theoretical framework that informed the research concerns and conduct of the inquiry. Chapter two reviews literature that provide theoretical underpinnings while positioning my research in the existing body of research on teacher migration and curriculum concerns. Chapter three explains the methods and procedures engaged for gaining entry, collecting and analyzing data and the ethical guidelines observed for the conduct of my research. I share a narrative of my experiences as a migrant teacher which provides insights in my role and episodes that have shaped my personal views and credentials as they relate to the conduct of the research. In chapter four, I present the finding of the research. This is done through individual case studies of each participant using themes that were derived from the data. In addition, composite responses to each research question are provided. The final

chapters discuss the findings, implications, present conclusions and make recommendations for relevant stakeholders as well as suggestions for further research.



## CHAPTER 2

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

This study is designed to examine and describe the curriculum perspectives and experiences of immigrant teachers and how they respond to a new environment within the United States. The review of literature covers those areas that will add credence to this discourse by drawing parallels in scholarly thought, highlighting tensions as well as gaps that make my research focus germane to current educational research landscape. Areas covered in the literature include contributions of immigrant teachers, immigrant teachers' challenges, professional experiences of immigrant teachers, contribution and support within the United States.

#### **Gaps in the Studies of Immigrant Teachers**

A body of literature exists on migrant teachers within the North American context. However, this covers migration from specific areas such as Asia (example Arun 2008 and Carrion 2007). A search of the literature revealed that very little had been researched on teachers leaving Jamaica to teach in the United States. Sives, Morgan and Appleton, (2004) state that there is “a gap in our knowledge of teachers' movements and its implications for achieving educational objectives.”

In the year 2000 and after a few studies on immigrant teachers started emerging (e.g., Arun, 2008; Basit & McNamara, 2004). These were mainly focused on integrating

teachers from diverse cultural groups into the teaching in a country different from their country of citizenship and the challenges they face.

My review of the literature revealed that these researchers (Arun, 2008; Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004) focused on ethnic minorities such as South Asian immigrant teachers, Jewish immigrant teachers, South Africans, Filipino immigrant teachers, Latino immigrant teachers and the Commonwealth Caribbean. Research studies such as these have given me in-depth knowledge of immigrant teachers from those ethnic standpoints. However, the implications of their findings seemed often limited only to that group. The present study attempts to fill in these gaps given the opportunity for research in the present rise of immigrant teachers in a selected school in South Carolina.

### **Reasons for Teacher Migration**

Teacher migration studies have identified distinct reasons for migration of teachers such as finance, opportunities to travel, professional growth and development opportunities (Manik, 2005). According to Manik (2009), developed countries offer significant private benefits, such as higher incomes and new learning opportunities, to individuals from developing or third world countries and their families.

A study on teacher migration from India also corroborated Manik's findings. The findings suggested that India's teacher migration is driven by rising demand in the destination countries which was highlighted as a pull factor and the push factors being dissatisfaction with the Indian education system and a desire for a better life. This constant movement has had a negative impact on the Indian teacher population and has led to a shortage of teachers, especially in rural areas and further shortages are projected as demand grows under the Indian Right to Education (RTE) Act. This movement has

also posed a problem in preventing India reaching their educational goals (Sharma, 2013).

Another study (Hanushek, & Kimko, 2000) found that countries such as Jordan act as a labor-exporter to other Arab countries. This was due to the expansion of higher education in Jordan which created an excess supply of skilled labor that resulted in the migration of teachers to neighboring countries.

### **Contributions of Immigrant teachers**

Teachers do not enter schools as empty vessels; the resources they bring with them help shape their practice and professionalism (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999). Several researchers (Arun, 2008; Myles, Cheng, & Wang, 2006) highlighted the qualities and strengths immigrant teachers brought to the new countries. Arun (2008), after studying South Asian immigrant teachers, concluded that the immigrant teachers within his study seemed to be knowledgeable, compassionate and capable educators. Carrison's (2007), findings also supported Arun who states that immigrant teachers' strength resided in the fact that they brought with them that multicultural perspective that can influence their instructional practices.

In another study, Santoro (2007) reported that immigrant teachers were more understanding of the backgrounds, attitudes and experiences of students from targeted minority groups than teachers of the host country. Therefore, they are able to guide teachers within the school district on effective methods for interacting with these students who are from diverse backgrounds since these students may pose cultural and linguistic and other challenges.

Carrison (2007) also identified several strengths of immigrant teachers. These include (a) “their approach to the profession from a culturally responsive perspective that not only influences their instructional practices but also their advocacy for students” (b) demonstrating “the potential to become leaders who can guide others including pre-service and in-service educators in issues relating to the education and welfare of culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families”

### **Integration of Immigrant Teachers**

Integrating any person in a new culture has always been a challenge since there are multiple dimensions to the integration process. Deters (2008) conducted an analysis of studies, which looked at the professional acculturation of internationally educated teachers in Israel, Australia and North America. Findings from the studies revealed that language proficiency, personal traits such as self-confidence and resilience and support from colleagues and students were instrumental for successful acculturation.

In another study conducted in Australia, Seah (2003) studied immigrant secondary mathematics teachers. This finding suggests that there is a relationship between the personal and cultural values of the immigrant teachers as they transition from their professional practice in their home culture to their new practice in Australia. Seah’s findings also indicate that the environment of immigrant mathematics teachers in Australia is supportive of immigrants’ values and do not demand conformity to the local culture. Seah concludes that this ability to successfully transition across cultural-educational borders may be transferable to other settings where differences play a role. In concretizing this argument Schön (1987), points out that the most effective professionals use their previous experiences to better understand how and why things happen. Schön

(1987) encourages professionals to take responsibility for improvements on and in practice.

In another study located in Canada, Bascia (1996), the findings were contrary to those of Seah, Bascia compiled a life history of a Black Indian-Asian immigrant teacher. In this study, he found that the participant had several challenges as he tried to develop a professional identity in that country. The respondent was convinced that people looked at him differently as a “black man” and did not give him the plausible voice he deserved. The professional positions he frequently requested were repeatedly denied. His idea was that whites were not accepting of minority teachers, even though they had a lot to offer to the American society.

### **Challenges for Immigrant Teachers**

Beyond instrumental skills to master, such as the United States’ ever-changing-curriculum, immigrant teachers must adjust to the new school culture and student-teacher relationships. They also must face stereotypes, from both faculty and the student population who seem to feel threatened by the influx of immigrants coming into the United States. Bartlett and Hollifield (2008) argued that international recruitment as currently practiced in most schools may be harmful to the education system of the destination country as well as the immigrant country of origin. The idea was that all the teachers are overseas trained teachers are well-qualified and able to teach in areas like math, science and special education. However, Bartlett et al. (2008) contend that to be effective, overseas trained teachers need specialized induction support to guide them as they adjust to the differences in student population, school workplace and culture.

Ross (2003) examined the experiences of immigrant teacher candidates from diverse cultural backgrounds in a two-year pilot program at the University of Southern Maine. The idea behind the study was that these immigrants and refugees can respond to the needs of the diverse student population. While the study identified some challenges, many strengths were reported including their high motivation, sophistication, awareness of world issues and highly literate in three to five languages. They also shared stories with the students regarding stories about their own culture and education system. Ross (2003) states that some new immigrant teachers face challenges, including the relationship between teacher candidates and students. Because of different experiences, beliefs and expectations, many newcomer teacher candidates had more problems with classroom management than other interns. He also found passing standardized tests such as the Praxis to be a major problem as teachers within his program under study were having problems passing them on the first and second attempt.

Even though the United States education system is similar in origin and context, to countries such as Jamaica, the implementation and execution of lessons and delivery of instruction is vastly different. It is well documented that these immigrants taught in countries where their students are highly motivated; they continually aspire to reach the top of the academic ladder. Moreover, there are also differences in students' behavior where many American students are not afraid to challenge authority figures and seem less concerned about the importance of educational achievement as a means of shaping their future. It is often a "reality check" for teachers coming from these other countries, where the academically gifted is lauded and respect for teachers is a deep-rooted cultural tradition (Pole, 1999; Stuart, Cole, Birrell, Snow, & Wilson, 2003).

Also in some countries, teaching remains an honored profession and teachers' high social status stems from these countries' culture and public recognition of their important social responsibilities. However, in the United States, the opposite is often the case.

Remennick (2002) examined the occupational needs for professional integration for immigrant Russian teachers who have different culture and language from the Israelis where they were teaching. The barriers these teachers faced included language, curriculum, new school culture and student-teacher relationships. Those immigrant teachers who had mastered the language of the local area reported more successful experiences. Teachers were found to leave the profession due to a lack of discipline among the students and the lack of respect for teachers' authority. Therefore, from the perspectives of the immigrant teachers, successful teaching occurred when the local language was mastered, the curriculum was understood and implemented accordingly, the school culture was clear and immigrant teachers developed a relationship with students. Marvasti (2005) stated, "Language, even accent, may be used as a proxy for an individual's level of skills and lead to prejudice and discriminatory behavior in the work environment" (p. 154).

Boyd (2003), in a research conducted in Sweden concluded that teachers who had a foreign accent were viewed as less capable or less professional than other teachers. There were different classroom challenges and misunderstandings that were alluded to their language deficiencies, however on the other hand when similar issues arose with Swedish teachers it was explained as a lack of training or experience. A similar study done in Canada (Deters, 2008), found that teachers whose second language was English

and had an accent not associated with the host country of Canada was challenged by students, particularly at the beginning of their teaching career in the new country.

Immigrant teachers also believed that they had to resist negative stereotyping by their colleagues. This research also sheds light on the tremendous amount of responsibility placed on the shoulders of an immigrant teacher that native teachers do not have to contend with (Remennick, 2002). A study conducted by Stuart et al. (2003) concluded that newly arrived overseas-trained teachers “may need much longer to adjust to these cultural differences’ found in the hosting country.”

In a study conducted in Australia, Collins and Reid (2012) reported that some international teachers from Africa and India shared experiences of discrimination in the workplace and felt that their ethnic backgrounds made it harder to gain promotions. Gordon (2006) conducted a study in the United States on immigrant teachers. His participants expressed befuddlement over the need for people in the United States’ to erroneously categorize them by their nationality. For example, a Peruvian woman may be taken for a Mexican woman and a Vietnamese may be taken for a Chinese. Gordon (2006) then contended that, “Immigrants do not appreciate being lumped together with other American minority population because they come as people with distinct values, religions, language, cultures and contributions” (p. 29).

Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) in a study of Russian teachers immigrating to Israel stated that the experience of these teachers crossing borders had led to an increased institutional dependency, feeling like an imposter in the classroom and self-regulating behaviors in accordance with the new sociocultural environment. In her later work, she stated that migrant teacher’s stories “teaches us about schooling in the ‘host’ culture and allows new



questions to be asked about that culture and its arrangements for learning and teaching” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p. 372).

Because of widely differing past experiences and expectations, many immigrant teachers can feel rejected, have the sense of loss (being away from homes) or feel anxious in interacting with people (parents and other teachers) in their new environment. Some teacher may also experience the phenomenon of alienation. According to Klomegah (2006), alienation is the state of “feeling confused, lost, lonely, helpless and desire for dependence” (p. 304).

Another problem faced by immigrant teachers is the fact that they may have gone through the rigorous process of induction and certification especially when they were veteran teachers in their home countries. Morrow and Keevy (2006) studied Mauritius, South Africa, Australia, Sri Lanka, India, England, Jamaica, Canada and Northern Ireland. Their findings suggested that many countries had developed national qualifications frameworks (NQFs) to improve the transferability of credentials and facilitate migration. More than fifty NQFs were in place and three were in development at the regional level. They suggested the use of professional registration to benchmark teachers’ professional status internationally, which would benefit both the individual teacher and the receiving country.

### **Professional Experiences of Immigrant teachers**

High-quality teacher exchange programs offer rigorous, meaningful professional development opportunities and, as such, have the potential to raise the status of the teaching profession and improve the educational experience for multiple stakeholders (Manik, 2005). For teachers, professional exchange programs offer exposure to different

pedagogical methods and curricula as both international and local teachers have opportunities to share their expertise. Source and destination country students benefit from teachers' expanded worldview and improved teaching skills that come from experience working in different educational settings. School systems and administrators benefit from the diversity international teachers bring and from exposure to global best practices in teaching Manik (2005). In an increasingly interconnected world, international teacher exchange programs that provide support for teachers to learn and grow can be equally enriching for all persons involved.

### **Immigrant Teachers' Support**

Borko and Putnam (1995) offer evidence to support the fact that professional development plays an important role in changing teachers' teaching methods and that these changes have a positive impact on students' learning. Burns and Darling-Hammond, (2014), also provided evidence that professional development activities have a significant positive impact on teaching and learning. When teachers are given the opportunity, via high-quality professional development, to learn new strategies for teaching to rigorous standards, they report changing their teaching in the classroom (Alexander, Heaviside, & Farris, 1998).

The success of any immigrant teacher depends heavily on cultural orientation and professional development. Many programs provide orientations for teachers to ensure that they can ease into the culture of the United States without experiencing culture shock. According to Oriaro (2007), these immigrant teachers need on-going support to ensure they are as effective as possible in the classroom. Professional development efforts should ensure that teachers are able to transmit and discover the beliefs and values of the

dominant culture in a way that does not devalue the varying cultural patterns they are exposed to but affirms respect for them. In this way, teachers will understand the distinctive plurality that gives rise to different cultural styles, orientations, values and even prejudices. In other words, these teachers should be exposed to multicultural professional development. This is necessary as Nieto and Bode (2012) stated that multicultural education is “about all people, regardless of their ethnicity, ability, social class, language, sexual orientation, religion, gender, race, or other differences” (p.49)

Having high-quality professional development programs that are intensive, ongoing, focused on classroom practice and include culturally relevant pedagogy are very important as they help these teachers transition into their new school and new country easier. Changes in teachers’ beliefs are more likely to occur in settings in which teachers consider learning a communal activity (Joyce and Showers, 2002). When teachers take time to interact, study together, discuss teaching and help one another put into practice new skills and strategies, they grow and their students’ behaviors improve commensurately.

Professional learning communities are also important to the immigrant teachers. These will help to develop and support teacher’s knowledge and skills and to help improve their methods of instructions. The general understanding must be that some of these teachers’ beliefs and values are different from those in the United States. Banks (1994), asserted that teachers must first recognize and understand their own worldview, attitudes and beliefs to understand the worldviews of others. This was further emphasized by Nieto and Bode (2012), “teachers need to confront their attitudes and perceptions of

students, particularly students who are different from themselves and then work to develop positive and caring relationships.”

Oriaro (2007), highlighted the fact that, the initial years for these immigrant teachers should not be viewed as a time of survival but instead professional growth and development. According to Rebore (2015) supporting beginning teachers at the outset contributes to retention of new teachers in the school system. The beginning teachers in turn, move through well-delineated stages of development from day to day. This was evident in a study done by Meyers and Smith (1999) who researched a cooperative effort between the Middletown (Vermont) School District and the University of Vermont to recruit and nurture immigrant teachers. This project focused on mentors, university faculty members and classroom teachers working with immigrant teachers who were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The researchers found that there were four major factors that influenced and supported the work of mentors with protégés in the Middletown project chief among these are that the mentor teachers advised mentee on using university resources and dealing with the personal issues that college students typically face. They also monitored their protégés’ progress through formal and informal meetings, seminars and e-mail conversations to address their changing needs. Such support is important for the immigrant teachers as it helps them feel welcomed and supported. This is in accordance with Rebore (2015) who stated that beginning teachers need help in dealing with teaching challenges specific to their students. Veteran teachers can help beginners identify a large range of possible solutions for several of these problems since they have most likely gone through them before.

Immigrant teachers also need to be treated in ways that they feel accepted and equal. Equal treatment regardless of their gender, race, nationality, or language is essential to all immigrant teachers. Policies that create inequities in schools should be eradicated.

### **Immigrant Teachers' Response to Diversity**

For all students to have equal opportunities for educational success, teachers must be aware not only of what children need to learn but also of the knowledge and skills that they bring from their linguistic and cultural background. The inclusion of teachers of backgrounds like those of students has been recognized as being critical (Ryan, Pollock, & Antonelli, 2009). Quirocho & Rios (2000) stated that teachers from different background may bring their unique perspective to education due to their personal experiences with diversity-related issues. Villegas and Lucas (2004) asserted that due to their shared experiences with marginalization and discrimination, teachers of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds are well-positioned to develop positive relationships with their students.

It should be noted that learning to become an effective culturally responsive teacher takes time and self-reflection, especially for the immigrant teachers. Many teachers migrate from countries where there is a single defined (or dominant) culture. The opposite is true of the United States. Therefore, they may need to go through an induction phase where they not only identify strategies to address diversity but is also given opportunities to see native teachers engage in teaching and learning activities that address diversity. This induction is particularly necessary because most teachers have been educated and are engaged in teaching in school situations with a strong philosophy

and practice of one standard curriculum for all. We may thus find it 'natural' to label those who do not meet curricular norms as unfit for school. Only by challenging their existing beliefs can immigrant teachers be enabled to envisage different inclusive situations.

### **The Immigrant Teacher and Culturally Relevant Pedagogy**

In any classroom that is rich in diversity, students' educational experiences will be enhanced by the various components that contribute to this diverse setting. They will learn from those whose experiences, beliefs and perspectives are different from their own. This perspective was endorsed by researchers (e.g., Gay, 2010, Ball and Tyson, 2011) as the best way to learn in a richly diverse intellectual and social environment. These firsthand experiences brought by the immigrant teachers help students to be more empathetic toward people outside their own culture. According to Myles, Cheng and Wang (2006) "school should become more inclusive and accepting of the experiences and identities" (P. 244) of immigrant teachers and see them as someone who will enrich the lives of these students through culturally relevant pedagogy.

There is a common myth that the aim of culturally relevant pedagogy is simply to enhance students' self-esteem. Although that might be one outcome, Shujaa (1995) asserts that the actual intent of culturally relevant pedagogy is to help students develop the skills to achieve economic self-sufficiency and to develop citizenship skills based on a realistic and thorough understanding of the political system. Donnelly (1999) stated that if all students are to receive a high-quality education, they need to be exposed to culturally diverse perspectives and experiences. Teachers from different ethnic, racial and linguistic backgrounds are needed to help facilitate their learning. (p.13). In the

classroom, the immigrant teacher is more likely to seek out methods that are closely aligned to culturally relevant pedagogy. According to Chapman and King (2012) whatever the issue or problem a student might face, with the right teaching approach, the student can and will learn. Basit and Santoro (2011), in their qualitative study, found that migrant students had cultural, language and identity issues. These issues resonate with many immigrant teachers who may have had similar experiences.

Culturally relevant pedagogy requires teachers not only to be able to effectively implement best practices but also have the belief that such practices are essential to quality teaching and learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students (Ladson-Billings 2014). Tatum (2000) observed that students in Chicago who were several years below grade level passed the requirement to get into high school in one year with relevant pedagogy that accounted for their cultural differences. Darling-Hammond, (1993) stated that there is a need for schools to provide opportunities for students to engage in activities that promote in-depth understanding, critical thinking, creative problem solving and the ability to use knowledge in real-life settings. This drive has led many schools to change their practices to match up with other countries of the world and having their school improvement efforts aimed at supporting students to become better thinkers, creators and problem-solvers.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this literature review was to synthesize research on immigrant teachers' challenges, strengths and limitations. The literature reviewed highlights the reality that immigrant teachers who come to the United States may face many challenges especially in their first year. Helpful strategies are needed to help them overcome these.

On the other hand, they often bring with them skills and abilities which could be beneficial to the education milieu in the United States. The experiences of Jamaican immigrant teachers remain under documented in the literature. My research will add to this largely neglected area of inquiry while identifying parallels and differences between my research respondents (teachers of Jamaican origin) experiences and those of immigrant teachers from other countries which have been more robustly represented in research literature.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

For my research, I engaged qualitative methods of data gathering and analysis.

“Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world.” (Merriam 1998, p. 6). Merriam (2009) also stated that qualitative methods are especially effective at describing complex processes. I identified a case study methodology as the best means for this type of study. According to Creswell (2008) “the type of problem best suited for this form of research is one in which it is important to understand several individuals’ common or shared experiences of a phenomenon.”

According to Yin (2003), a case study design should be considered if:

- the focus of the study is to answer “how” and “why” questions
- the researcher cannot manipulate the behavior of those involved in the study
- contextual conditions are relevant to the phenomenon being studied study, or
- the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context.

Therefore, many qualitative researchers (including Yin 2003, Merriam, 2009) argue the strength of their chosen method is its ability to provide written descriptions of how people experience a given phenomenon.

Qualitative content analysis was the method applied in the research process.

According to Merriam (1998), “The focus is thus on understanding from the perspective

of the person or persons being studied” (Willis, 2007, p. 107). According to Merriam (2009), it attempts to understand individuals’ lived experiences and the behavioral and social meanings that these experiences have for them.

Participants were given opportunities to talk about the phenomenon that was being explored since there are no fixed response questions. Questions were open-ended and lend themselves to in-depth explorations of the personal and professional landscape of the participants. These questions focused on individual experiences, beliefs and perceptions

I used unstructured observation within the participants’ classroom. During the classroom visits, I recorded observational notes and later looked for recurring patterns of behavior and relationships. After analyzing the data, I used a more structured observation instrument to assist in the data analysis process (see Appendix C). Information was then extrapolated and organized in the relevant themes and sub-themes.

I developed a list of significant statements and group these statements into themes. Clusters of themes were typically formed by grouping units of meaning together (Creswell, 1998). Creswell stresses the importance of describing what the participants in the study experienced and how the experience happened, including verbatim examples. He stated that the data analysis includes the highlighting of “significant statements, sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participant experiences the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61).

### **Data Collection and Description of Data Source**

Creswell (1998) points out the need for triangulation in qualitative research. He encourages the “use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators and theories

to provide corroborating evidence” (p. 202), triangulation requires the use of several different types of data. To fulfill this requirement, I used three methods data sources: Interview transcripts, observation notes and artifacts. I engaged these methods due to their potential to yield enough information about the study phenomenon and address objectives of the research. Table 1 shows the research questions and each source of data for the related question.

Table 1.1. Research Questions and related data sources.

| Research Questions   | Data Source   |
|--|---|
| What are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths Jamaican immigrant teachers brought with them?                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants interview</li> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Non-instructional participant interview (literacy coach)</li> <li>• Lesson plans</li> </ul> |
| How do Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe their challenges as they navigate the curriculum landscape of the United States? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants interview</li> <li>• Observation</li> </ul>   |
| What personal or professional changes do Jamaican immigrant teachers encounter during their time in the United States?                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants interview</li> <li>• Non-instructional participant interview (literacy coach)</li> </ul>  |

The primary source of data for this case study was participant interviews. After conceptualizing the focus and design of the study, my next step entailed direct interaction with participants. Prior to the period of collecting data, I provided participants with invitations to attend an informational meeting, regarding the research study. During this meeting I provided a synopsis of the proposed research study and the rationale for such a research. I also answered questions and provided additional information as requested by the immigrant teachers.

A second meeting was called where I gave each participant a consent form (see appendix F) with an explanation and details of the study which I reviewed with them. The participants signed the consent form after receiving clarity on the nature and purpose of the research and the ethical guidelines followed for the conduct of the study. Because I had an obligation to protect the participants' identity the signed consent forms were not placed in the research as an appendix instead a copy of the letter without the signature is presented. A copy of the letter of invitation to participants is included in Appendix E. The participants also received a copy of the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval notice for the conducting of this research (see Appendix A). The purpose of having participants review a consent form prior to the commencement of the data collection process was to enhance their understanding of the nature of the study and help reduce their concerns about the risks of participation (Creswell, 2007).

Before the initial interview took place, I pilot tested the interview questions, by interviewing two other immigrant teachers who were not in the study. As I went through the questions, I paid close attention to instances when respondents hesitated to answer or

asked for clarification, this provided insights for refinement of particular questions that were either too vague, difficult to understand or were predisposed to multiple interpretations. I also asked the respondents in the pilot interviews if there were any questions that they did not understand or any that made them feel uncomfortable. I subsequently went back and revised the interview schedule. I then field test the revised questions before commencing the actual data collection process.

I interviewed the immigrant teachers several times during the summer of 2017, with follow-up interviews in fall of 2017. The interviews were designed to explore the views, experiences, challenges and changes related to the selected immigrant teachers. These interviews were semi-structured interview conducted on a one-to-one basis. All interviews were arranged to accommodate the participants' schedules and were conducted in locations selected by each participant. This was important to ensure that participants were as comfortable as possible during the interviews. I used open-ended interview questions (see Appendix D) when asking the immigrant teachers to comment on specific concerns (e.g., challenges). This approach, enabled me, to corroborate evidence obtained from other sources.

I conducted the interviews in each participants' classroom. Prior to the actual interviews, I sent them a list of the primary interview questions this provided a snapshot of questions that were designed to be asked beforehand. This they said helped them to feel more comfortable as they had a general idea of the nature of the questions. To prevent the participants from being over-prepared and scripted, follow up questions were used to probe for additional information.

With the permission of the interviewees, I used a small digital voice recorder with an internal microphone so that data collection was both accurate and unobtrusive. I personally transcribed each interview so that the information was easily analyzed. Providing a duplicate source of original material as backup was also essential in case the originals were damaged or lost. This became necessary as I was aware that equipment failure or environmental conditions or any unforeseen problems might affect the interview data retrieval process (Easton, McComish & Greenberg 2000). After each interview, I listened to the recording and made notes. I ensured that I listened to each recording more than once. Hycner (1999) recommend that the researcher listen repeatedly to the audio recording of each interview to become familiar with the words of the interviewee. In any instance, when I was not clear about any part of the interview I went back to the participants and asked them for clarification or elaboration on what they said.

The second modality of data collection was participant observation. According to Creswell (2002) participant observation is “an observational role adopted by researchers when they take part in activities in the setting they observe” (p. 200). The observations occurred in each participant’s classroom while teaching; also in professional setting such as staff development. I took intensely descriptive notes during these sessions. According to Creswell (1998), noting and recording of events in their social setting has many and varied advantages. The study sought to garner information on immigrant teachers’ experiences and challenges. Therefore, gathering data in this way allowed me to observe behavior exactly as it occurred in the real world.

I conducted the initial series of classroom observations in May 2017. The teachers were aware of the day that I would be observing their classroom since they were asked to

suggest the times when it was most convenient to accommodate me in their classes. I hand- wrote the observation notes using an unstructured method. All other observations were structured using an observation document created by me. (See Appendix C)

The final source of information was artifacts such as participants' lesson plans. There was also a non-instructional participant interview done with the literacy coach.

### **Participant Selection**

To obtain in-depth and descriptive information aimed at capturing the personal insights of practicing immigrant teachers, I chose to purposively sample immigrant teachers from the southern rural area of a southeastern state. This purposeful sample consisted of four practicing immigrant teachers from Jamaica, who entered the United States classroom with over two years of experience teaching in their home country. However, these were first-year migrant teachers. This criterion was created to gain perspectives on immigrant teachers who have recently made the transition from their country of origin to a new environment.

My decisions regarding the selection of the study sample were based on my research questions. The participants were able to inform important facets and perspectives related to the phenomenon being studied. The establishment of rapport and empathy was also critical in the selection process and beyond since I was hoping to receive detailed information through our interactions. The number of years the participants were living in the United States was also a criterion I chose participants who are first-year immigrant Jamaican teachers who would have completed one-year teaching in a rural elementary school in southeastern South Carolina when I started the data collection process. All the participants are immigrant teachers who are presently in the

United States on a J1 visa. Teachers who migrated to the United States and are presently holding an H1B visa and Green Card were not selected for the study. The participants' level of education was not a criterion for selection.

**Description of participants.** The key participants in the study were four female teachers in an elementary school. They include one pre-kindergarten, two 2nd grade teachers and one 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade teacher. All the teachers migrated from Jamaica. They were teaching for the first time in the United States but had prior experience in their home country. Participants spoke fluent English. Pseudonyms are used throughout the paper to protect the identities of the participants.

Marlene is a cultural exchange teacher on a J1 visa. She is a second-grade teacher who has taught in Jamaica for four years before teaching in the United States. She falls within the 30-40 age range. This was her first time in the United States on a work program. She stated that as a teacher her responsibility was to develop the whole child by imparting good values that will enable them to be productive men and women in society. One of her main challenges entailed creating lessons that were age appropriate and at the same time drew on the content specified in the state department document.

Diana is a first-year Jamaican teacher. She falls within the 30-40 age range. She is a cultural exchange teacher and presently on a J1 visa. As a new teacher in the United States, she could be aptly described as eager and enthusiastic. Diana taught on an international license during our interaction. However, she hoped that after five years she would receive an extension and her initial certification. Diana possessed an



undergraduate degree. She taught for 13 years in Jamaica before coming to the United States. She expressed the desire to have a rewarding and fulfilling first-year in the United States. Her classroom challenges ranged from lesson planning to student behavior.

Milli-Ann taught in Jamaica for four years. A bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education provided her credentials to be recruited to as a teacher in the United States. In her new position, she was assigned to teach a pre-kindergarten class with 20 students. As a new teacher in the United States, she expressed interest in gaining new knowledge and helping her students. Her favorite adage was "students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care." She stated that education should empower a child so that (s)he could make a positive contribution to the world. Her major challenge was lesson delivery, where she opined that students lose focus easily. She was very optimistic regarding her challenges and proffered that they could be easily overcome with the right strategies and methods.

Arlene taught in Jamaica for three years. She migrated to the United States on an exchange visa. She was assigned to teach a third-grade class. She has a bachelor degree in Primary Education. Her stated philosophy is "success through effort." Her challenges ranged from classroom management, lesson planning and lesson delivery.

In addition to the recruitment of the four teacher participants, I interviewed the school literacy coach, Mrs. Lanchester (pseudonym). I needed to gather information about her perception of first-year immigrant teachers. Although Mrs. Lanchester is not the focus of this study, the data obtained from the interview with her served to not only to verify the information shared in interviews with the teachers and help with triangulation but also to obtain information on her perception of first-year Jamaican immigrant

teachers. Mrs. Lanchester, a Jamaican migrant, was an apt candidate for this role since she too was exposed to the teaching practice in both countries. The Jamaican immigrant teachers were also comfortable with me interviewing Mrs. Lanchester as they viewed her as one of their own and did not feel threatened by her.

In this study, I was actively involved in the professional lives of the individuals being researched. In conducting qualitative research, Merriam (2009), stated that, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Therefore, I played a dual role of an informal participant and researcher.

### **Research Site**

A rural school district in southern South Carolina provided the location for this study. The district accommodates three schools. The district employed approximately 60 teachers in the school district. The elementary employed ten immigrant teachers while the other schools employed four each. The entire school district student population was slightly over 700 based on the last district report card 2014 of this number, 374 attend the elementary school.

The racial composition is 356 (92.9%) African Americans, 14 (3.6%) whites, 1(.26%) Asian, 1(.26%) Hispanic and 11 (2.87%) of two or more races. The racial composition of the school indicates that it predominantly serves African Americans. These students are from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Since poverty is rampant in the community, the school is also a high poverty school. It has 100% free lunch program. Pollock, (2008) states, “opportunities provided and denied in schools often align with existing inequalities in the surrounding society” (p.374). Based on the high level of poverty in this school, it continues to get insufficient

funds to make even the teaching environment a safe and comfortable one. Because of these inefficiencies, the roof of the school was in grave need of repair, the gymnasium needed renovating, and the building was not energy efficient. Most parents in the community possessed a high school diploma but did not receive a college education. Research has shown a link between parental education levels and child outcomes such as educational experience, attainment and academic achievement. For example, there was a positive association between children with highly educated mothers and their rates of participation in early childhood education programs and home literacy activities (U.S. Department of Education 2009).

In the elementary school (the primary research site) there are 17 homeroom classes from pre-kindergarten to 5th grade and three special education classes. The students receive related arts in the areas of music, physical education, media and computer lab. A recent budget cut has removed the Art and Crafts program from the school.

Opportunities for diverse cultural exposure are limited in the surrounding communities. Two major cultural events that take place in the community are the annual Mahogany Festival (pseudonym) and the nearby college homecoming. The nearest cultural centers (Columbia, Charleston) are more than fifty miles away. The community has no year-round supervised recreational activities for youth such as community centers and parks.

The School's vision and mission are supported by its daily curricular and extracurricular activities. Without a vision or mission, the school lacks direction. The managerial staff ensures that the vision and mission are accomplished through teachers

engaging in weekly professional learning communities. In these meetings, teachers meet to discuss best instructional practices, to reflect on their instruction and to examine student work and to analyze student data.

The school recently recorded gains in terms of the state and testing criteria. For the past three years, the school received a value-added score of 5, which indicated that students were making significant academic growth. Because of the improvement, the school was removed from “priority” status. In 2013, the state recognized the school’s academic accomplishment by providing the school a Palmetto Gold and a Palmetto Silver awards. Three of the students were recognized by the State Department of Education for having scored the maximum on ACT Aspire, the state standardized test that was administered in 2014 – 15 school year.

### **Data Analysis**

Data for this qualitative case study were analyzed manually through qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2000 and Sarantakos, 2005). Qualitative content analysis has been defined by Hsieh & Shannon, (2005) as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278). Krippendorff (1980) stated that its purpose is to provide new knowledge, new insights, a representation of facts and a practical guide to action. Since this research set out to examine the curriculum perspectives and experiences of immigrant teachers it follows that qualitative content analysis is the most suited data analysis method. The data collection and analysis occurred concurrently beginning May 2017. The participant interviews were recorded and therefore was transcribed to aid in the analysis of the data. Information from each

data source (recording of participants interviews, field notes and supporting documents) were read through and transcribed. I made brief notes in the margin when interesting or relevant information is found. I used both deductive and inductive methods to code the data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Therefore, I allowed my themes and categories to emerge from the data while some were from theory and previous studies. Then I organized the data using open coding and creating categories. Periodically I composed analytic memos to begin to formulate ideas around particular findings. The written material is read through again, and as many headings as necessary were written down in the margins to describe all aspects of the content. Since there were several transcripts, I repeated this procedure for each transcript. For example, notes taken during observations of the teacher were reviewed for these same themes and subthemes and coded for analysis.

Information from each data point transcript was assigned a paragraph number and divided into categories. This resulted in 30 categories. Next, all categories were collapsed into 15 major categories and 7 sub-categories. This list was then reduced to get 4 themes (Creswell 2007). These are listed alphabetically as follows: (a) challenges, (b) Changes (c) Navigating the Terrain (d) Strengths. Each theme has two or three sub-themes (Schreier 2012). Finally, the coding for information in each of the four categories was expanded into conventional paragraphs to include fully illustrative quotes from the participants. These provided support for the themes. A chart was also utilized which facilitated understanding of the data and helped in making comparisons.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical principles are vital in any research. To maintain a positive ethos, the rights of all the participants in the inquiry must be respected. The Ethical Standards of the American Educational Research Association AERA (2000) clearly state the requirement that “participants, or their guardians, in a research study, have the right to be informed about the likely risks involved in the research. Also, of potential consequences for participants and to give their informed consent before participating in research” (section II.B.1).

Obtaining informed consent before the collection of data from participants was a top priority for me. Letters and consent forms were circulated to the relevant participants (see Appendix E). The letters contained the aims and objectives of the research; it informed participants that they would be updated throughout the process. “It is of paramount importance that educational researchers respect the rights, privacy, dignity, and sensitivities of their research populations and the integrity of the institutions within which the research occurs.” According to this information, great care must be taken with the identities of participants. Considering this all names of participants were anonymous (or fictionalized) to keep their identity private. No unauthorized persons were given or had the privilege to access raw data and files, correspondence or any other documentation. Even though all these steps were taken there is a slight chance that confidentiality may be compromised merely by the fact that I could easily be associated with a school during data collection. Therefore, individuals within the school and surrounding environment are likely to be able to identify those who are participating. This dilemma makes reporting the research particularly difficult even with the use of

pseudonyms. All of this was taken into consideration when informing the participants. Therefore, this was explicitly stated. The participants, if they so desired, were free to withdraw from the research without penalty. Along with these Winter (1987) suggested other ethical consideration practitioners should take when conducting a research:

- Make sure that the relevant persons, committees, and authorities have been consulted and that the principles guiding the work are accepted in advance by all.
- All participants must be allowed to influence the work, and the wishes of those who do not wish to participate must be respected.
- The development of the work must remain visible and open to suggestions from others.
- Permission must be obtained before making observations or examining documents produced for other purposes.
- Descriptions of others' work and points of view must be negotiated with those concerned before being published.
- The researcher must accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality.”

### **Trustworthiness**

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), to establish trustworthiness, credibility is an important factor that should be considered. To do this, I adopted research methods well established in qualitative inquiry. Therefore, the methods of data analysis have been derived, from those that have been successfully utilized in previous comparable projects.

I engaged in triangulation by drawing from a multiplicity of data sources to understand the Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers. These methods include observation, interviews, and artifacts, which are the major data collection strategies for my research. According to Creswell (2007), the use of different methods in concert compensates for their respective limitations and exploits their individual benefits.

I also engaged in member checking. Member checking is a technique used in qualitative research to help increase the reliability of the study (Patton, 2001). I allowed research participants to read through and review transcripts of interviews to review for accuracy and ensure I capture correctly and accurately the essence of their information. The participants had a period of two weeks to engage in this process and returned the signed document to me. The findings were also discussed within a focus group and tell if the themes and categories make sense and if the overall account is accurate. Participants comments have been added to the final document.

Another method I employed was the examination of previous research findings on teacher migration to assess consonance and tensions in theoretical frameworks, methodologies and findings in relation to my current study. According to Silverman (2000), the ability of the researcher to relate the research findings to an existing body of knowledge is a key criterion for evaluating works of qualitative inquiry.

The setting, participant and the themes are thoroughly described, providing rich detail for the readers of the research study.

### **Methodological justification**

To obtain personalized and insightful responses to my research questions I used a qualitative research design. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the



meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world. (Merriam, 2009). Even though Patton (2002) warns that qualitative research is “time-consuming, intimate and intense” (p. 35); other researchers (Creswell, 2002 and Stake 2010) have emphasized the benefits of being a qualitative researcher. The researcher must physically go to the location, setting or site to observe, interview or collect documents. The events can then be understood adequately. The close researcher involvement helps the researcher gain an insider's view of the field. This vantage point allows the researcher to find issues that are often missed (such as subtleties and complexities) by the scientific, more positivistic inquiries. Qualitative research sharpens the researcher’s listening skill. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) commented that listening carefully to a respondent is imperative in good interviewing. The descriptive nature of qualitative research is very beneficial to the practitioner as she or he could turn to qualitative reports to examine forms of knowledge that might otherwise be unavailable, thereby gaining new insight.

Respondents get a chance to tell their thoughts. Sometimes there are sensitive issues which a respondent would like to discuss but never gets the chance to do so, only through participating in a research study can they bring these ideas out. Myers (1977) postulates, that persons within specific ethnic groups and low-income populations may be socially distant from the researcher are more likely to participate in the in-depth interviews. Richardson (1996) argues that human learning is best researched by using qualitative data.

Since the research focused on migrant teachers’ experiences, a qualitative approach was most suited. I engaged case study method specifically because of the

descriptive features that reside in this tradition. Yin (2003) defines the case study research method “as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clear and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.” (p.13). According to Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000), case study refers to research that investigates a few cases in considerable depth. They argue that a case study implies the collection of unstructured data and qualitative analysis of data. They tend to bring attention to a challenge or difficulty. Since immigrant teachers face many challenges and difficulty it follows then that a case study again would be the most viable option.

### **Area of Specialization**

My area of specialization is curriculum and instruction. Since teachers play a pivotal role in curriculum, it follows that a study focusing on teachers would be very appropriate. The topic of immigrant teachers is also important since they add diversity to the curriculum experience. Smith (2000) noted that “Diversity represents a challenge and an opportunity for education. It is a challenge because policymakers and educators are called to respond to the claims of disadvantaged minorities for whom education represents a key to greater opportunity and parity with other groups in society. It is an opportunity because a society that learns to live with diversity is likely to achieve faster rates of economic growth and social development.” Smith’s idea, along with many others, is the driving force behind the role of diversity in the schools and many views. Ladson-Billings (2014) underscored this view that diversity is important as it strengthens schools, communities and the workplace and all other areas in society. When students are educated within a diverse setting, they are better prepared for the real world which is a

mirror of the classroom. This preparation helps them become good citizens in this society; it also fosters mutual respect and teamwork for persons who are from a diverse background.

## **My Story**

**Prologue.** My name is Claudia. I am a Jamaican immigrant elementary school teacher. Eight years ago, I embarked on an unpredictable journey when I entered United States classroom as a teacher for the first time. For me, that journey meant uprooting from my home of over thirty years and starting life in a foreign country. My story is based on my new classroom, community happenings, anticipation, disillusionment, amazement, and triumphs. My story provides a reflective narrative on the professional and personal dimensions of my life, particularly as an immigrant teacher. While my narrative is not neutral it is embedded in sociocultural notions of what it means to be an immigrant teacher (Johnson & Glombeck, 2002). My story is unique to my experiences. However, the descriptions I provide may allow immigrant teachers to relate to the episodes I include. Native educators may also be able to relate to some of my stories as it may help them to make sense of their professional and personal experiences with immigrant teachers in an out of the classroom context. My story is episodic rather than a linear chronological narrative since these episodes highlight the dominant themes, in my mind, that characterize my existence as an immigrant teacher.

**The Lure of the United States.** Like every Jamaican child, from an early age, I was aware that there is a “great country” a few hundred miles north called the United States (or “Merica” as most Jamaican children would call it). My early impressions were based on what I had read watched on television and the stories related to me by my

grandfather who migrated to the United States as a seasonal worker where he worked on various farms work picking apples. I grew up learning that the United States is a place of extended opportunity and that I should find means of getting there. Because I was from a lower socio-economic group in Jamaica, my family's utopian ideal was to "*go ah farin and return to our country and show off pan neighbors and frens*" [translated: Go to the United States and return in a boastful way to impress neighbors and friends]. Some of the status symbols for boasting would be new clothing, jewelry and adding a few pounds. To date, this is still true among some of my older family members.

My desire for migrating was rivaled only by my desire to teach. At an early age, I knew I wanted to be a teacher. As a child, I admired my teachers and the teaching profession so much that I would line up dolls and even face the trees and pretend to teach them. I became a teacher at a very early age. After ten years of teaching in Jamaica, I decided I needed a change in terms of experience and professional opportunities. Teaching in the United States was an opportunity that appealed to me. The failing economy and the constricted of opportunities for growth and exploring diversity in Jamaica, also motivated me to migrate. At that time there were many teacher recruitment agencies luring teachers to work in the United States.

I applied for a job through the Visiting International Faculty (VIF) program. After a series of interviews and completing application documents, I was offered a job in s school district in southeastern South Carolina. Despite being unable to find much information on the school district or community in my google searches, I still decided to accept the offer of this job. When I arrived in this school district I realized that my

numerous visits to other states (New York and Virginia) did not prepare me for this geographical location.

I was placed in a school in a rural community serving low- income families. The school was faced with many challenges. Chief among these were lack of resources, understaffing, and a high population of struggling and special needs students. I soon realized that most of the teachers, students, and community members had very little knowledge of other cultures. I found myself responding to questions like “do you have houses in Jamaica?”, with alarming frequency.

Because I was informed that I was a cultural exchange teacher I was looking forward to sharing my culture within the school district. My first thought was that I would teach the students about my country and others. This was far from the expectations of the school district and this information was communicated to me by another Jamaican who had been here before me. She made it clear that these schools need teachers to teach their students not to tell about culture. “They are into test scores” she stated.

**Culture Clash.** The first time I spoke my students mimicked me. At first, I hated when they tried to imitate me but later realized that would be a permanent fixture since the adults also did the same thing. My students loved the idea that I was from a different country. The students would listen to me attentively when I spoke about my country and how we were different or how we were alike. One thing that fascinated them was the different names we used. For example, like the English, I say football while Americans say soccer; they provided me a full explanation of why it should be soccer and not football, I explained my reason and it later became an issue that led to an intense classroom discussion.

One word that created tension was my use of the word “hush.” In the Jamaican context it means “never mind” or “I hope you feel better” which is often used by teachers to let ailing students know that you care. It is often used to show regret, sympathy, and pity. In the United States it means “shut up.” Therefore, my use of the word did not come across as intended by me and had left one student in tears because she was feeling sick and I was attempting to show sympathy by telling her “hush.” She cried and cried until another student who took on the role of my “American language mentor” told me the reason for her tears. I then told her how sorry I was and explained to her the meaning in my country.

**Understanding American Culture.** Some aspects of the American culture took me a long time to understand while others were easier to grasp. The first year I came to work in the United States students would give me apples. I always took my apple, washed it and ate it right there. The students would watch me and whisper to their friends. I later learned from a first-year teacher that an apple given to you by a student is something you cherish. While I could have eaten it later, I should have taken a photograph of it or demonstrate some sign of appreciation. The apple is a symbol of knowledge and the children are giving you an apple to thank you for the knowledge you have given them. I later realized this was so as he had taken a picture and put it on social media and received many comments such as “you are doing something right”, “keep doing what you are doing” and “you are a great teacher.”

A striking recollection of the differences in culture was in my first year as an immigrant teacher when we (about four immigrant Jamaican teachers) were invited to a local barbecue. We were told that the barbecue began at five in the evening. Being

steeped in our Jamaican culture that the stated time is a mere approximation of the time when they would start receiving guests we sauntered into the venue at about 7 pm. To our embarrassment, by that time the barbecue was almost done and the hosts were packing away leftovers. This and other classroom episodes made me acutely aware that punctuality is important in the American context. Inside and outside of the classroom you are expected to be on time. All schools and community events began on time. If it was announced that it would end within thirty minutes, it seldom lasted for a longer period. If you are even five minutes late you are tardy and this could lead to some form of reprimand (verbal or written).

**Family Matters.** I moved to the United States as a single (but attached) woman without children. This status changed during my third year when my first daughter was born. Having a child was a joyful experience, but one that also filled me with trepidation since my partner (now husband) lives in Jamaica and I would be on my own for a lot of the time. On the birth of my first daughter, the support network was great. I had an entourage of three from Jamaica, my husband and two of our closest friends who were a married couple. This time was exciting for us since we would be welcoming the first child among both couples. When I arrived home from the hospital with my new daughter, the house was beautifully prepared with signs and balloons and more welcoming décor for the new baby.

My daughter, as young as eight months old, started traveling to Jamaica. As early as eleven months old she traveled accompanied only by her father while I stayed behind to complete my studies at the Masters level. Therefore, my daughter attended daycare both in the US and in Jamaica. She also spoke Jamaican at an early age and would return

singing the Jamaican songs she learned at the daycare. One day when she was about two years old on arrival at the daycare in the US fresh from a visit to Jamaica she saw a picture of the statue of liberty. She ran toward it then stood at attention and started singing in her loudest voice “Jamaica, Jamaica, Jamaica land we love,” which was the national anthem.

Joined later by a sister and a brother my eldest daughter is still the most “Jamaican” of the lot. In her current elementary school which she attends with her younger sister they achieved a semi-celebrity status as the “Jamaican twins.” Unfortunately for them, I burst their bubble by clarifying that they were born in the USA. However, it is undeniable that they are proud of their Jamaican heritage and speak wistfully about Jamaica and prospects of living full-time with their father and being close to other family members. I too become very wistful at times about going back to Jamaica since my husband, based on his profession and grounding in Jamaica as an eminent educator, has not migrated to the USA. While he visits as frequently as possible and we make the best use of it by making frequent interstate road trips and other activities, the situation is sometimes strenuous emotionally for both parents and children. There are goals that we have set and hope to achieve them soon so that we will be permanently united as a family.

Anxieties about the school our children attend and the schools we would like them to attend have been everyday concerns. My first daughter attended the deep rural school where I worked for three years. While she was at the top of her class, she assimilated the culture and the language of this deep rural community much to the chagrin of her father and his relatives.



In contrast to my children, there is another immigrant teacher who has become very close to my family. Her two children are forbidden by their parents to speak Jamaican. In their four years of being in the US, they have never returned to Jamaica and have never articulated plans to return to visit.

**School Experiences.** On arrival as an immigrant teacher my recruiting agency provided a three-day workshop on “American students” this presentation was very general about the United States since teachers were heading to both rural and urban areas in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. We were informed that most students had Asthma so we should avoid wearing strong perfumes. No one zeroed in on the specificities of the rural community where I would be working where personal hygiene often was not a priority. I soon found out that two words of choice for my students were “musky” and “stank” since they used them to characterize both their peers and adults who they felt needed to improve their body odor.

We also had a two-day new teacher workshop in our school district. All new teachers were required to attend, including immigrants. During the workshop, we received a list of tips on how to work through the first few days of school such as move slowly, set high expectations, work in small groups and dealing with disruptive behavior. We received many documents, but little was said on the specificities of the curriculum. I was left to navigate this new terrain on my own. I soon discovered that while I was an experienced teacher in my country, I had to relearn all about the components of effective teaching for the rural southern American context, including classroom management and lesson planning and execution. The students were not like those I left in Jamaica. I had to learn to provide different incentives since motivation to

achieve seemed stymied by the social safety nets that existed. While a good motivational talk on achieving so you can take care of yourself and your family would work in Jamaica, my first mention of this was greeted with responses such as, “but I get my food stamps” and “my mama gets her check.” I later discovered that most of the population in the rural city received state and federal benefits. I pondered and tried to devise other ways of motivating them.

Even though I was of a similar skin color as most of the persons in the school district, my Jamaican heritage was enough to place me as an outsider in this community as manifested in the speech and actions of the persons with whom I interacted. I learned very quickly that being the same color as the majority population (African American) does not mean that you are a part of that group. While white privilege is the buzzword on the lips of scholars and civil society, an unnoticed phenomenon is what I term kinship privilege. I soon discovered that privilege is dependent on who the dominant group in any community is. As an immigrant teacher, I have been scrutinized more by administrators and have also experienced what I may term “unfair” treatment by African American administrators. I remember when I was pregnant with my second child and had to take frequent bathroom breaks. I asked a colleague (African American) to watch my students while I went to the restroom. When I returned, I learned that the colleague had stepped out and two students were engaged in a fight. The principal (African American) did not entertain my explanation that I asked another person to watch the students and wrote a letter of reprimand to me for leaving the room. She attributed no blame to the teacher I asked to monitor the children in my absence. I also observed that whenever there was a dispute between an American teacher and an immigrant teacher, administrators were very

hesitant to reprimand the American teachers while being very generous with their reprimand of the immigrant teacher. Immigrant teachers negotiated this in several ways, some cried openly while others fought back either with the tongue or the pen. I often chose the pen since I quickly realized that when situations are documented they are treated more respectfully by the administrators.

My initial conception and that of most Jamaicans was that all Americans spoke impeccable English. On my first day of entering my class, my mouth dropped open when I heard the students. Phrases like “you is”, “we was” and “ova day” for “over there” were uttered freely. Yet, if you did not speak that way you were viewed as an outsider. I soon discovered that by taking these students a few miles away on a field trip they were viewed as outsiders when they spoke since whole groups would stop and stare at them and sometimes asked them where they were from whenever they opened their mouths.

I was paired with a mentor teacher Mrs. Deere (pseudonym), to help orient me and guide me through the specificities of the South Carolina classroom. Mrs. Deere was an African American who was employed at our school for over thirty years. I observed that she rarely had disciplinary problems since she taught the parents of most of the children enrolled in her class. In our initial meeting, she was pleasant and seemed very sincere in her desire to provide support for my teaching and interaction with students.

As time progressed, Mrs. Deere occasionally stopped by my classroom and asked if there was anything she could do to help me. To me, these were blurred offers of assistance so even though I sometimes needed the support I was aware that she had all her work to complete. Later I discovered that Mrs. Deere would be coming to me for information and instructional ideas since my students earned the top scores in the district

in the state tests. Even though I was aware that I had much to offer, I still had a lot to understand such as the curriculum standards that guide the school programs and district and school policies that may differ from those in Jamaica, refresh my knowledge of content area and make subject matter comprehensible to students. I also needed help in relating to students since they were of a different cultural, linguistic and social background. I also needed help challenging and motivating my students to be successful.

There were times when Mrs. Deere and I did not see things eye to eye. I used to train students to dance. In Jamaica, a very competitive society, where national competitions in athletic performances began from early childhood institutions to the tertiary level, we chose the best athletes to engage in sports competitions and best performers to perform. When I started a dance group in my school, I was shocked to be told by Mrs. Deere to include students if they wanted to be included and not based on their talents. It was a huge culture shock for me as I always wanted to produce the “best” performances. Later I realized the merits of Mrs. Deere’s point. Discrimination comes in many forms and by denying children the opportunity to participate in selected activities due to my perception of their talents might have adverse effects on their self-esteem and self-worth. How then, did I see so many American movies where auditions and competitions and victory were their themes and plots?

Teacher observation and evaluation seemed to be the *modus operandi* of the school district. Never in my life had so many different persons come in my classroom to watch me teach. There were aspects of teaching that they dubbed non-negotiable and these had to be in place every time someone came to observe your class. Being from another country I tend to agree with Delpit (2006) that, “we all interpret behaviors,

information, and situations through our own cultural lenses” (p. 151). The multiplicity of tasks requires a lot from you as a teacher. In class, you are required to have several grades for each week. In our home country, students received grades at the end of the school term and there were no hard or fast rules as to how many entries the teacher should produce. There are also different teaching methods that you are informed that observers need to see as they enter your classroom such as differentiated instruction, academic conversation, technology, graphic organizers, active learning, etc.

I have also experienced some perks in my classroom experience as an immigrant teacher. There have been American teachers I have worked with who have provided insights on the culture and customs of the community which has helped me to more coherently negotiate my experiences as an immigrant teacher. Their stories of their experiences in terms of family and professional pursuits have provided me with much deeper insights on how they relate to each other and how they relate to immigrants. Sitting and just talking to the students also helped me to get a better understanding of their culture. By listening to them relating their home experiences I began to realize that many of their actions are because of under-exposure. Many of them have seldom left their community and have never been to any of the major cities in South Carolina.

Negotiating discrimination has been a dominant part of my existence as an immigrant teacher. I have experienced this in both subtle and overt forms. When America got a new president in January 2017, African American teachers who I expected to be more sensitive and aware about the forms of discrimination were making very insensitive jokes such as, “hurry and get back on your boat” and “you need to leave before Donald Trump puts you out.” Many of them did not seem to know the distinctions between legal

and illegal or documented and undocumented immigrants. Making immigrant teachers the butt of these jokes seemed to be the highlight of these teachers' gathering. I felt ostracized and as immigrant teachers, we were constantly discussing among ourselves how insensitive they were.

The assault on immigration to the United States seemed to give some students the ammunition to be rude. One student asked in what I thought was a very condescending tone why immigrants had to come to this country to work. While this could have been a great teachable moment, I was not in the frame of mind for that. I just did not provide an answer. In a similar incident, another student who I instructed to redo a part of her assignment started arguing and sealed her outburst by stating "I am so happy that Donald Trump is the President", which I interpreted as meaning all immigrants will soon have to return to their homeland.

Economically, as an immigrant teacher, I have been able to do a lot more. Every Jamaican teacher's dream is to own a house and a reliable motor vehicle. As a teacher in Jamaica, I could afford to buy a used car after eight years in the teaching profession. If you wanted to buy a new car in Jamaica it would possibly take weeks or months to sort out financial terms and receive a loan approval from a lending institution. An experience that stands out in my mind is visiting a car dealership in Augusta, Georgia, just to look at cars. In two hours, we were driving home in a brand-new vehicle. As my little daughter proudly perched in her seat looking out the window from a higher vantage point, my husband and I marveled at the ease and swiftness of processing and completing the transaction. In terms of earning and saving to achieve desired goals (scholarly and personal) working in the United States has made my goals more reachable in less time.

**Epilogue.** My name is Claudia. After eight years and some months as a Jamaican immigrant elementary school teacher, I have moved from a state of innocence to experience; anticipation to disillusionment; dreams to reality. As I related various episodes of my existence as an immigrant teacher I realize that I had unrealistic expectations about my sojourn in this role. Was I fairly treated by all administrators or peers in my country of origin? Am I viewing the immigrant teacher's experience through different lenses than I would view my experiences in my own country? Have I crossed the bridge of expectation and settled squarely in the land of reality? For these I had no definite answers. However, the episodes in my story resonate with central themes in my life including scholarly achievement, professional journeys as well as personal trials and triumphs. My story serves as a snapshot of an immigrant teacher's experience which might (or might not) be transferred to the experiences of others.

### **Research Timeline**

Permission to begin research with the participants was granted by the school principal in January 2017. I received approval from the IRB May 2017. Data collection started immediately and took place over a five months period. Initial interviews were conducted face to face, with follow up interviews during the summer months. At this point, the participants were between their first and beginning second years of teaching, therefore, their memories and ongoing perceptions of themselves as immigrant teachers provided additional information for this case study. Documents such as lesson plans were given to me at the beginning of the summer. Literacy coach interview was done in fall 2017 to ensure that information received from interviews, observation and document are triangulated.

Member checking began immediately after the initial interview transcriptions were prepared. Data analysis began in summer 2017 after all participants had reviewed and approved the interview transcripts. Chapters four and five of the dissertation were written over the summer and into the beginning of fall 2017. Member checking continued during the process of writing and revising Chapters four and five.

In addition to a qualitative dissertation, I also prepared a shorter report summarizing major findings from the study. This document was printed and given to all the participants and the school's principal and literacy coach.

### **Summary**

This chapter described the methodological considerations, participant selection, procedures and timelines that guided the research process. The inclusion of my story in this chapter illustrates the inextricable link between the researcher and the phenomena being researched. The next chapter will detail the findings from the data collected



## CHAPTER 4

### Research Findings

#### Introduction

Chapter four provides an analysis of the data collected from four Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers teaching in southeastern South Carolina. This chapter is separated into five sections: (a) research questions and purpose of the study (c) reintroduction of data collection and analysis (d) themes and subthemes which is subdivided into four major themes. These themes were derived from data analysis and were identified as, strengths, challenges, navigating the terrain, and changes. These major themes are then further divided into subthemes. Finally, a summary is offered at the end of the chapter that provides a succinct account of the findings.

**Research Questions and Purpose of the Study.** This study attempted to answer the following primary research question: What are Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers' experiences as they navigate the curriculum landscape in the United States of America?

The sub-questions are:

- (a) How do Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe the challenges as they navigate the curriculum landscape of the United States?
- (b) What are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths that Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers bring with them?

- (c) What personal or professional changes do these immigrant teachers encounter during their time in the United States?

The purpose of this study was to examine the curriculum perspectives and experiences of Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers and how they respond to a new environment. The study utilizes qualitative research methods, predominantly residing in the case study tradition, to understand the Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers experiences in a rural school in southern South Carolina.

### **Participants' Narratives**

To provide holistic narratives on the participants, my initial presentation of the data is in the form of multiple case studies with each participant treated as an individual case. Findings are also further synthesized and presented to illustrate commonalities and contrasts among the respondents' experiences.

**Marlene.** Marlene grew up in an extended family which was a primary source of support for her regarding life events. She shared a special bond with her extended family members who gave her love and emotional support as she grapples with the idea of moving to another country. Marlene expressed a strong affection for her country Jamaica. She enjoys her native language (Jamaican Creole), her food and her method of dress. She frequently adorns herself with accessories (e.g., flag pins, necklaces, and bracelets) that symbolize her Jamaican heritage. She articulated her deep connections to her culture and a desire to keep cultural aspects of her life she brought with her.

Marlene taught in Jamaica for six years before coming to the United States to teach a second-grade class. Her reason for coming to the United States is like many Jamaican teachers who migrated. Most are motivated by the many and varied opportunities offered to professionals in the United States. She states that "I wanted a

difference. It's mainly about the cultural exchange. So even though I taught at the American based school for three years, I just wanted to be elsewhere. Although the school is an American based school, you are still in Jamaica. We follow the American curriculum, but you are still not in America.” She was also encouraged by her sister who had previously migrated to teach in an adjoining school district. Even though she was assigned a liaison person by her recruitment agency, her sister did much of the ground work and helped her with the transition to the United States.

***Pedagogical strength.*** Marlene teaches 20-second grade students. Throughout my observation, I noted the size of her class and her ability to have students maintain classroom routines. Routines were specific for each activity such as, entering and exiting the classroom, group-work, peer review and distributing papers which helped to reduce chaos and increase instructional time. I did observations in her classroom on three different occasions and the procedures were almost identical each day. She provided frequent opportunities for students to ask and answer questions and expand upon responses. She used words from the students’ expressions to bring out meaning as she teaches. At times she used anecdotes from her own experience and the students’ experience. She revealed later in an informal conversation that she used strategies to help students achieve fair and equal educational opportunities to learn and at the same time, help them think critically.

Each day an agenda was written on the board for students to reference as she moved along with her lesson, indicators, objectives, and topics were also posted. When students entered the room, they greeted Marlene and headed straight to do morning work, or she sometimes invited a student who did not get a concept from a previous lesson to

conference with her “one on one.” Marlene insisted that all students should greet her (by saying good morning or good afternoon) as she was not only teaching her students to pass standardized tests but also to improve their social skills. This I noted as her Jamaican method of teaching as most Jamaican teachers believe that inside the classroom “students should not only be able to possess book knowledge but also demonstrate common courtesies and common sense.” Most students in the classrooms at Trident Elementary were not required to say good morning when they arrived at school. However, in Marlene’s class, they all greeted her in cordial tones. If they did not greet her they were reprimanded and are required to return to the door and re-enter. “We are not here only to teach content but they need to learn soft skills. They are important”, she explained. These “soft” skills are emphasized within Jamaican instructional contexts.

The fact that Marlene taught in both a Jamaican based school and an American based school seemed to influence her teaching style and her ability to navigate the culture in the American classroom. Assignments and grades are very important in Marlene’s classroom. Grading scales and rubrics were prominently displayed at the students’ eye level. Each student also had a folder that contained rubrics, worksheets, and extra materials just in case they completed the regularly assigned work before the scheduled time. The classroom and instructional materials were meticulously laid out. It was evident that she had experience dealing with the American style of classroom management and instruction as her walls displayed students work which changed to match new topics she is working on. She utilized ideas that were more evident in the United States classroom than in the Jamaican context. She also made use of those dominant Jamaican ways of teaching such as providing explicit instruction, choral reading and reciting.

Marlene shared her culture with the class by teaching music and poems from Jamaica. While the day was not designed to teach about other cultures and there was hardly any place in the curriculum to add it, Marlene talked about her country's culture during the class downtime. The class gathered around her to listen to stories of Jamaica and how it shares a similar history with the United States. They also listened to songs and danced to Jamaican music. At the back of her classroom was a small area with Jamaican artifacts that the students also interacted with. Her teaching also extended beyond her classroom walls. During her short period of teaching in the US, she collaborated with a colleague to stage Jamaica Day. She stated:

We had a Jamaica Day where we displayed our dance music, food. Another Jamaican teacher and I did that. We did it in the gym and the entire school was invited. The school also had a May Day and we incorporated our Jamaican culture.

***Multiple experiences as strength.*** Marlene stated that her strongest attribute was her advanced knowledge of content and understanding students of different cultures that she learned in her native country through her teaching at an American based.

In Jamaica, I have taught three years at an American based school. It was my experience at the American based school that caused me to incorporate strategies from both contexts. There we mixed the American based curriculum with the Jamaican curriculum, which had you using the best from both worlds. This included mixing methods such as using different centers, using explicit instructions and at the same time getting students actively involved. The luxury of being a part of two different classroom environments even before getting to the

United States has helped me to get what I consider best practice and use it to my best interest.

Her style of teaching and classroom practices have resulted in her students making gains and exceeding expectations on the spring benchmark and (Measures of Academic Progress) MAP testing. This she said showed her strength and this made her very proud.

Marlene's instructional approaches have also led her to be chosen as teacher of the month which was very humbling for her. "As an international teacher I got teacher of the month I think that was in February. Whoever selected me saw that in me and thought that I deserved it. I am very proud of that." The literacy coach spoke highly of Marlene stating that "she has developed relationships with her students which has inspired them to work hard."

While strengths were evident in Marlene's experiences, there were also challenges. These challenges for Marlene were not only those identified in the classroom but also some personal challenges influenced her professional practice.

***Classroom management challenges.*** Marlene stated that respect from students was often difficult to come by and that her prior teaching experience did not require her to put as much into classroom management which extended beyond the classroom to the home environment here. She states;

I somewhat knew the culture and knew some of the challenges that I would face although these challenges are a little drastic. My major challenge is getting students to follow directions and stay focused.

Based on Marlene's methods used for classroom control I did not see too much classroom control challenges when I conducted observations of her teaching. Her

classroom control seemed to be one that had the students following rules and being aware of expectations. The students' transition from one area to the next in the classroom was also smooth. According to the literacy coach, classroom control was a strength of this teacher. Therefore, it seemed likely that Marlene's Jamaican background might influence her to urge to create a more regimented classroom setting. This regimentation exceeded the requirements at Trident Elementary.

***Home School Challenges.*** Marlene mentioned how difficult it was to communicate or interact with parents. There seemed to be tensions between her expectations of the parents regarding discipline, homework support, academic support and reinforcement of school rules and the reality of what is happening. Her Jamaican background where parents and teachers openly discussed issues regarding the students without fear of offending each other seemed to be elusive at Trident Elementary. Issues she wished she could discuss openly included; disruptive behavior of some students misbehaving, learning issues and low grades, she expected the same "respectful" response from parents of Trident and has on numerous occasions come under "fire" from the parents during parent conferences. Marlene stated that she constantly made American parents upset when she attempted to discuss issues related to their children with them directly as she had been used to do so with parents in Jamaica.

It is hard to communicate with parents about their child's behavior. They refuse to meet with you. I try to reach out to parents and they either never show up or even if they do all the problems you are seeing and explaining to them are turned back to you. Even though I have worked here for the full year there are some

students that I still do not understand because the parents never show up or if they do the teacher is at fault.

The views on parents blaming her for students' mistakes or disrespectful behavior resonated with me, since I was called a few times to be a mediator in several of her meetings with parents who often felt dissatisfied with the way Marlene communicated with them. Marlene described herself as a teacher with a strong personality and apart from her being an immigrant teacher, her strong disposition also affected the way parents perceived her as a teacher.

Marlene opined that American teachers are too "easy on" the students when it comes to providing feedback and grading their work, therefore when she conferences with parents about students grades there is always some amount of conflict.

I do not know what they (parents) have against international teachers but it's very sad. If you are a parent say nothing about problems with their child. They make claims of always seeing passing grades and blames failure on the international teacher. When they see these specific changes by the immigrant teachers it makes them more ignorant [Jamaican for "upset"] and not want to meet with me, when really the aim was to help their child get the needed help. Before everything was sugarcoated/fluff and because of this, there will forever be denial. and I refuse to lie. I will not give your child something he/she does not deserve.

***Lack of cultural awareness.*** Despite Marlene's successes in teaching and her expanded knowledge in pedagogy, she was aware that discrimination and "racism without the races" (Balibar, 1991) exist in the school. In embracing Balibar's notion of "racism without races" I also rely on Barnard-Naude's (2011) clarification that Balibar describes



racism as etching itself in practices (e.g., forms of violence, humiliation, contempt and exploitation), in scholarly and everyday social representations that advocate preserving identities from invasion. I concur with Barnard-Naude's citing of immigration as a new category identified by Balibar that is used as a substitute for the notion of race. Hence the designation of the term racism without the races as an apt designation for the situation with many immigrant teachers. This is vivified by the experiences related by the participants in my research.

Marlene found herself defending her status as an immigrant who is lumped in both legal and illegal status. While some forms of discrimination were not overtly stated she thought that implying that she was probably an illegal alien was just as demeaning. Her expressed wish was that the teachers and other staff at the Trident would understand that when international teachers migrated from their home country to work in the United States, in most cases it was not because they are living in poverty.

A custodian said I heard that you guys do not like to hear about the banana boat. I had to defend myself saying "I have been coming here for years and I have never taken a boat I have always paid my fare to enter the country legally." Her experience resonated with me since after our interviews, during staff development session I overheard a group of teachers also make discriminatory comments in the form of a joke about getting Trump on this immigrant teacher to send her home. Another teacher shouted, "get on your banana boat before I call Trump!"

***Credentials and Praxis Exam.*** Marlene only had minor glitches in transferring her credentials and evaluation of her teaching certification to teach in the United States, most of the problems were associated with her country such as mailing documents in time

and signing off on documents. Her major problem was after getting to the United States and after three months in the system she found out from her agent that she had to pass the Praxis test before the end of her first-year teaching in South Carolina to renew the international certification and teach at Trident Elementary School.

When I got the letter about passing the Praxis Exam I was shocked. I did not know the expectations. I went and purchased the past papers, but these did not seem to help because they had nothing to do with the test. I really do not like the Praxis because of the breakdown of the questions. There were both multiple choice and constructed response focusing a lot on pedagogy. The allotted time given was too short, and the questions were very cultural and provided advantage to the United States [citizens]. Because of this there was a big gap between what I know from my home country and what I have learned since I got here. While I learned a lot being here it was not enough to pass the Praxis and I have done two sittings so far. The first one I needed fifteen more points and the second one I needed five more points.

To date, Marlene had not done another sitting of the Praxis as she resolved that she would ensure that she studied extensively for this test so that this would be her final sitting. The district also requested a waiver for the cohort of immigrant teachers and others in the future so they would not need to pass the Praxis during the first year of their arrival into the United States.

***Personal Challenges.*** One of Marlene's major challenges was the feeling of separation from her family back in Jamaica.

The hardest thing I would say is separation anxiety - moving away from my family-My family is a small closely-knit group. We usually did everything together and enjoyed each other's company. So, it's just separation anxiety.

***Challenges as a pathway for growth.*** While the many and varied curriculum innovations for implementation (e.g., balanced literacy, Leveled Literacy Instruction (LLI among others) was a bit overwhelming for Marlene, she viewed this as an opportunity for growth.

The different programs the school bought and you are supposed to implement them in your classroom. I have learned a lot from them. Even though they take so much time to plan. For example, Balanced Literacy and the different components for teaching reading. My ability to learn all these ... is just a plus for me.

She also completed courses through the school to satisfy certification requirement for the Read to Succeed certification. These courses required a lot of reading of several journal articles and informational texts. Even though she saw this as far more work than she initially anticipated, she also viewed it as a method for growth as many strategies she was having issues implementing in her classroom are now clearer to her.

I have done the read to succeed course and I have learned a lot. It is helpful. It is a lot of work but all those strategies are very helpful. I was doing these (strategies) but I was not doing them properly. These courses help you to do these strategies properly and implement them accordingly and effectively.

***Navigating the terrain - navigation strategies.*** When an immigrant teacher arrives in the United States, they often find a school cultural value system that is different from that of their native countries. These conditions often cause immigrant teachers to

find methods to cater to the differences they are experiencing. These methods often help them to develop better relationships with their students, coworker, administrators, and parents

Marlene's navigation strategies ranged from spending time with other Jamaican teachers and reflecting on the days happening, to focusing on classroom routines that helped her to be accountable in her instructional activities. Along with other new immigrant Jamaican teachers, she spent a lot of time talking about Jamaican life and comparing and contrasting the classroom context in both countries. She is also engaged in introspection on daily happenings at work and used them as catalysts for growth

I reflect a lot so things will happen now and will not get the effect until couple days. I have to go home and reflect so if I am having a bad day yes it will come but I will just let it pass. When I settle I reflect and I normally arrive at the best solution within a few days.

Marlene also attributed her ability to navigate the classroom and school culture at Trident Elementary to her persistence. "I think I have a very strong personality that works for me and it works for my kids. In everything I do I try to put the best foot forward. I am very persistent."

Marlene credited behavioral routines she established for her class as a key navigation strategy.

From the start of the year I established my expectations. I jotted mine down and had the kids jot mine down also we then come together and create a classroom rule. Now, when those rules are created if you break those rules there is a consequence I did not set the consequence they did. So, if they break it then they

will pay. It works - there is some form of stability - there is routine. So, I use those to keep the kids focused.

***Support.*** Marlene related her impression of her positive experiences with selected administrators and staff members at the school. She stated “I like the school, I like the person they put to lead me. I think she is always open and willing to hear and if you are having problems you can go to her she makes me feel really comfortable. and I think that’s the reason I am still here.” Despite random acts of discrimination previously described she expressed a sense of belonging at Trident Elementary School “They said that these people are known for their southern hospitality which is true. I have found persons that I feel as if I am home with them. Even my co-workers especially the older ones, they are very helpful. I definitely see that family closeness.”

At the recruitment program level Marlene shared her thoughts concerning the level of support she received:

They (the program Educational Partners International) provided someone that will work with us from back home. The liaison is from here and she gives you a list of things that you need to do. She keeps you abreast of your move, telling you the paperwork you will need, helping me to find decent lodging, where your school will be and give you an idea of houses in the neighborhood. I think my experience might be different from a number of other immigrant teachers as my sister was already here and she gave me a head up as to what I was coming into” With the program, we had orientation for three days. They tried to get us familiar with where we are going and some of the things we should and should not do. How to

deal with parents on a professional level. Who we can talk to about any issues we are having at the school and district levels,

Marlene outlined positives and negatives about her initiation experiences as a immigrant teacher:

The school let us meet with persons from the district who basically lay out the same thing (as EPI). The expectations some of the things you should not do. As well as we met with the principal. I was helped a lot by the teachers here. The American teachers see to it that I was not lost. Some made sure that I was good they called me. When I get here they ask if I need materials they tell me some of the things I need to have in my classroom. So, I was guided.

Even though she had a mentor, Marlene expressed reservations about the effectiveness of the mentor program, as she was not informed that she had a mentor and what will the job of the mentor be and how the mentor would be instrumental in her transition into this new school. “At the latter part of the schoolyear, I was told that I was given a mentor who would come in my class and do observations and so on. Before I was told that she was my mentor she used to speak to me and help me but I was not sure why this was happening.”

***Changes - professional change.*** Marlene revealed that some methods she used to teach in Jamaica (e.g., various reading strategies) required adaptation and more in-depth understanding on her part. Therefore, when she entered the United States and was given the opportunity to learn more from a course offered in her district, she made it a part of her priority to sign up for it.

I am never absent from a professional development. I have been learning about all these different implementations of different models I have learned a lot, things that I thought I knew are coming together. Even the read to succeed course. I have done it and I have learned a lot. It is helpful. It is a lot of work but all those strategies are very helpful. I was doing these [strategies] but I was not doing them properly. These courses help you to do these strategies properly and how to implement them accordingly and effectively. It is a lot of work but I am learning to tighten up my instructions.

**Diana.** Diana grew up in a Christian home; she seemed to have deep spiritual convictions. Her faith in God helped her to remain calm and strong during her initial phase of settling in the United States. A number of Diana's answer to various questions starts out with religious answers, for example, Diana stated "I believe in God and my life and my steps are ordered by him. So, when I heard that the school was in a poverty-stricken area I questioned 'Lord, why?'. But I was always told that I worked well with students and I said 'ok Lord, if it takes me to go and help then I will go'."

Diana taught in Jamaica for thirteen years before migrating to the United States. For Diana, the impetus to enter the United States teaching profession was mainly provided by her husband who informed and appraised her ability to teach and motivate students in the Jamaican context. He advised her that the possibilities were endless if she accepted a job offer in a country such as the United States. She was also motivated to migrate by the opportunity to provide a better future for her three-year-old son. Part of her plans for providing a better future for her son included placing him in a school that has ample resources and expert teachers. Additionally, her duration of service at her

previous school and her desire to experience life in another country were among other reasons for her leaving Jamaica. “I wanted a new environment I was at my old school for a long time” she stated. “Also, I studied the US curriculum and I wanted to see how the curriculum in another country is executed as opposed to my country.”

***Pedagogical strength.*** Diana demonstrated her pedagogical strength through the methods she chose to deliver in her lessons. It was evident that she had years of prior experience working with students since the strategies she engaged in her classroom demonstrated this. Each student in Marlene’s classroom received a warm greeting from her every morning, they are aware that they were required to greet her. Therefore, even if Marlene was busy speaking to someone else, a child would walk over to her and greet her. Marlene involved all students through a “morning post-it system.” Every morning she assigned a problem with a concept taught from the previous day, which she labeled as “question of the day” The students answered the question on a post-it note or on an index card and stuck the note on their assigned spot on a poster at the board. If she used an index card it was placed in her bin on the floor in front of the board. The student’s name was written at the bottom of the paper. While the students were reading the teacher previewed their answers. She separated them into three categories. I later learned that the designated categories were “understand”, “needs a little help” and “reteach.”

The students who fell into the reteach group were further analyzed so as to identify their strengths and weaknesses. The teacher formed small groups for the day and met with those students who were experiencing the greatest difficulty. After completing the early morning segment of her class, she then moved to her lesson for the day.



For two of the three observations I conducted in her classroom she began each lesson with the rhythm of traditional Jamaican songs which she creates using the content of the lesson to be taught. This generally drew the student's attention who recognize that and identified that she was singing a Jamaican song. Her lessons entailed modeling, explicit instructions, reciting, recalling, questioning and students getting opportunities to show what they understand before engaging in their independent practices. The students who did not seem to grasp concepts were placed into a small group to work with the teacher's assistance. Those who still experienced difficulties were given one-on-one attention and were constantly monitored throughout the independent practice session. Diana explained this practice as follows:

As a teacher from Jamaica, we believe in making a difference. So, if we see that a child is struggling we must do something. I believe based on my culture if you get a child you are supposed to make a difference as a teacher. So, if the child doesn't know how to write his or her name before the child leaves your class he or she is supposed to be able to read and write their name or know a letter that start their name. I think that is something that comes from my culture.

Prominently placed at the front of Diana's class was a bell named "Bella", whenever the students seemed to get too noisy Diana rang the bell. The reason for using the bell, she explained, was to students focus on the activities they were engaged in. Diana's English Language Arts (ELA) block exhibited usage of strategies covered in the literacy course and professional development sessions. She started out with "read aloud" and working with words, the students were encouraged to use at least one new word in their conversation as they turned and spoke to a friend. She later grouped them and had

them working on different activities for their reading assignment. While they read her group for the day (which was identified from a poster close to her desk) one group was called to the guided reading table. She was ready with their books. They discussed the pictures and compared their experiences with those seen in the pictures. They then read the words she had introduced earlier. As they read through the story she paused at each point to ask questions. All throughout this time, she found time to speak to students in other groups. At the end of the guided reading session, she gave the students a task which required them to complete a writing piece discussing the most important section of the book. As they worked on their task she moved to other groups and spoke about their engagements in the activities. She then brought the class back together. The students were given a chance to speak about their activities. She later ended the lesson with the students writing in their journal. Diana later shared with me that she was “really happy that ... students started developing an interest in reading. and their map scores have improved.” She stated that her strength came from her prior experience in the Jamaican classroom and her online master’s degree she pursued at a Florida University while in Jamaica.

In terms of my education, I have studied at an American institution so some of the jargon or phrases that they use are not new to me. Examples of words such as standards and benchmark I have heard them before. My work experience in the Jamaican classroom has helped me to understand how to manage my classroom. Therefore, I will not have my students running around not having anything to do.

***Multiple experiences as strength.*** Diana's Jamaican experience and studies have helped her to hold on to some strong beliefs that are instrumental in her classroom instructional practices.

A strong belief we have back home is the belief in respect. For example, something that a non-immigrant teacher would let slide I would not. So, if a child gets in the classroom in the morning and passes me at the door they must leave my class and all the other students will look at you because they know that you did not say good morning. You must say good morning you must use your magic words. Depending on how you talk to me you should know how to answer because it is out of respect so you have to do it.

The school ensures that the teachers are engaged in staff developments which Diana explained are far more than what she was exposed to in her home country in each year. She viewed these staff development as actual development of her knowledge and expertise, once she was an active participant in them. Additionally, she was chosen as one of the teachers to participate in a seven-week read to succeed course with the State Department of Education. She mentioned that although it was hectic, it was very beneficial. Reading concepts and skills that were shared with her before were made clearer through the course.

***Cultural awareness and cultural fluidity.*** Diana demonstrated awareness of the cultural differences of her students and used this to facilitate her classroom teaching and learning processes. She was often heard speaking Jamaican Creole (the mother tongue language of most Jamaicans), singing Jamaican songs or even speaking in Spanish.

I share my language and I have taught them several dances. I teach them our dialect. Sometimes I will say something and they ask what that means. Sometimes we will end up going on the internet to do research. Most of my students can say up to four words from the Jamaican dialect.

While she shares her culture with the students, Diana is also learning to accept and utilize aspects of their culture, therefore, she would take some words from the students' language and use them as she spoke.

I don't know if I should say try to use their language because I consider myself an avid speaker of English - but, their slang words, for example, they say fib and you know back home we can tell a child that that was a lie. Here I have learned to say you are fibbing or telling a story.

***Classroom management challenges.*** Initially, Diana experienced classroom management challenges. She stated that the students were disrespectful to her as a teacher and to other members of staff, many were stubborn with discipline-related problems and many were unmotivated to learn. These issues, she mentioned, were contrary to those in her home country where the status of a teacher seemed to command greater respect from students and parents.

The children are disrespectful. They speak to teachers' whichever way is comfortable for them. They fail to obey. For example, if a child is given a command they look at you as if to say "who are you speaking to?" and that was something very shocking to me. Back home, if a teacher talks to you show respect even if you thought that teacher should not talk to you. Then other teachers can

talk to you. But here it's a thing here where if you talk to me "I will call my mom, I will call my dad."

Diana commented that the problem of disrespect was not only confined to the classroom. She mentioned that students could be heard speaking to the administrative staff in ways that were contrary to her expectations and made her wonder if higher behavioral expectations should not be emphasized by the adults in her school setting.

***Curriculum challenges.*** Issues with understanding particular components of the curriculum was another challenge Diana described, even though she was convinced that it got better as she went through the school year.

I did not understand how to manipulate the curriculum, for example, ELA back home we knew exactly where to start. I think it is more organized back home. For example, here you are asked to create a curriculum. You have something to work with but you are told to fix it to work with. It is not all areas of the curriculum for math it's much better. Math is good. But the ELA - for the first nine weeks it's hard to follow but it gets a little better in the second nine weeks. After the benchmark, you see the need of the students. There is nothing there to guide you.

***Home school challenges.*** Diana discussed having issues with several parents since the beginning of her tenure at the school. She stated that the parents generally visited the school to clarify information given to them by their children. On most occasions, messages from the teacher were erroneously conveyed by the children. She stressed that it was important to make sure each parent leaves happy at the end of their interaction. She was aware that there might be consequences if they were not satisfied with her response to them. Her expectations from parents were for them to value and

appreciate her work as she aspired to improve students' academic performance. However, she hinted that she would not be able to raise the performance if the parents did not help in curbing students' behavior.

***Lack of Cultural Diversity.*** Diana expressed befuddlement at the stereotypical notions of immigrant teachers held and articulated by some members of staff. The fact that several immigrant teachers came to the district years before her, made their behavior even more puzzling to her. She stated that occasionally she found herself defending her right to be in the United States and more so her mode of transportation to get to the United States.

People from here think that I am from nowhere or from a place that is lacking in all facilities. This was hard for me to wrap my mind around. They sometimes make comments that are condescending. I must constantly stand up for me and my country; it is like they do not understand.

***Credential and Praxis Examination.*** Diana did not have a need to evaluate documents such as her transcript because she had studied at a university in Florida. However, she did not like the fact that after her years of teaching experience in Jamaica she had to redo some areas of training and certification she had previously completed on her arrival in the United States. One such requirement was the South Carolina Assisting, Developing and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT). This induction program required her to attend seminars twice per month as well as completing assigned tasks. She mentioned that she was also advised by other immigrant teachers that if she changed her visa immigrant status from a J1 (exchange visitor status) to an H1B (temporary worker) in South Carolina; she would have to redo ADEPT. This she said was taking a

big chunk of her time relearning what she has learned before. To her, the program closely resembled the professional development offered at Trident Elementary School.

Diana mentioned that she passed the Praxis test on her second attempt. In her first attempt, she needed only one point to pass. When she explored the possibility of an appeal she was advised by a test administrator that it would be easier for her to do a re-sit the test than requesting a re-mark. She believed the test was biased towards American teachers. She opined that the state requirement that they should pass the test in the first year of their engagement was somewhat unreasonable since they needed more time to experience the classroom culture and the culture of the United States.

I think it's a biased test, especially bias towards Americans. If I had taken it later, it would have been better. A later date would ensure that I have learned more about the American culture, Example, things like IEP and special education which we do not have back home are new to me. A little more time would ensure that I understand these. I bought things for Praxis such as their books but that is not enough. A year in the system would have helped. If I were given the opportunity to talk to special education teachers I am sure I could have answered these questions. The implication for not passing is also drastic as if you do not pass you will have to leave the state. I mean that's harsh after you have established yourself in one state you should leave because of a test.

The information she shared here was also reiterated by the literacy coach at Trident Elementary who is also from Jamaica.

Some of the things that are on the test such as IEP, are terms that we do not use in Jamaica and other terms too that I really can't remember right now. Those terms

they use in the US and we do not use back home they could not relate to them so when they saw those questions they could not complete them. These are just not in our experience and even if they read it, it will be hard for them to do those questions.

***Personal Challenges.*** Diana shared personal challenges as those related to her family and to the school staff.

One of my greatest challenges is moving away from friends and relatives. “I left my dad and sister in Jamaica and I had also gotten close to my husband’s family and sometimes you would just want to see them but you are here not able to just jump into a car makes it very hard.”

Other personal issues included not having family members to offer support when needed it. She related an incident that caused her to be absent from work.

About the third month of being here, my son got ill. If I were back home and my son got sick I would be able to go to work and dad would be able to go to work because there are always family to keep him. Here that’s not possible because if he is sick the daycare doesn’t want him there. You have to figure out which parent is going to stop from work to take care of the child.

Trident Elementary is located in a small rural community. Most of the houses were either government houses and others were rarely available. Therefore, finding an apartment to rent can have proven difficult. Diana also experienced difficulty finding suitable housing.

Finding housing was very challenging I had to live in a hotel for two weeks.

While we were in Jamaica my liaison was here looking for a house, but she could



not find anything near to my school. Most of the houses she showed me was trailer houses. As a Jamaican, someone showing us a trailer house is very disrespectful. We are not used to that. We had found somewhere which was not very suitable, it had mold and the carpet was dirty. We had to stay in the hotel until something came up.

***Challenges as a pathway for growth.*** A challenge she thought that would aid in her growth was the requirement that she created a curriculum to use in her classroom. While Diana saw this as an opportunity for growth she also saw it as a challenge as she had never done courses in curriculum development, neither had she ever worked with a colleague to create one. She described the curriculum development process as very disjointed and when she asked responses to her queries on the process were not very helpful.

I did not understand how to create a curriculum. I think that if I was given the task of creating a curriculum in my second year I would have done a better job. Since I am just getting to the point of understanding the state documents and how it is set up. I use what I know from back home and incorporate it with the information here. I asked for help but no one seems to understand therefore I just try to figure it out. Even though the task requires so much of me I think that in the end, I have learned a lot. I can always say I have created a curriculum for use in my class if I am ever asked.

***Navigating the Terrain.*** Although Diana admitted her concerns and feelings of anxiety about teaching at the Trident Elementary School she shared that she coped with the challenges by being positive, resourceful and creative.

With the students -like my class, there are rules that they know they have to abide by. Sometimes some people outside of my class I tell them what I stand for and those who will not listen I simply ignore them. I realized that some that I ignore try to get back in my good space. Where the teachers are concerned I just do me.

She mentioned that new immigrant Jamaican teachers would have been better able to navigate the terrain of teaching in the United States if the following are put in place:

There needs to be several professional development sessions on lesson planning and executing the curriculum. I would want to provide them examples of the lesson plans. Someone to show them this is how it is written - “here is a sample of it.” I would give information about the ethos of the school environment they are coming into, a professional development on Balanced Literacy which would take more than two days on how to manage all those pockets in balanced literacy. The reasons I want all of this done? Because these are challenges I have faced and I do not want anyone to have these same challenges.

**Support.** Diana stated that she had undergone teacher orientation at the district office at the beginning of the school year. This she said was a positive experience as she was provided with information and materials that could help her during instructions. This orientation was conducted collectively for a group of new teachers entering the district for the first time. The group had the opportunity to meet district staff, such as human resource and payroll personnel. The feature of the meeting she complimented most was the fact that she met colleagues whom she could rely on for support when issues arose during the school year. She expressed appreciation for the support that she received from

the district during the orientation phase. She was especially complimentary of the support her principal provided:

The principal was very instrumental in making sure that I had everything I needed to work with the children in the classroom. Emotionally too she was always there to open her door and say if you need to come in and take a five-minute [conversation].

While the district did not provide much support as it related to her personal needs she was paired with a liaison officer through her recruitment agency. This liaison was in the United States and provided her with much-needed information about the area that she was about to relocate to.

Providing a liaison officer who could give me a synopsis of what it is like living in SC which was very helpful. I remembered her mentioning that it was poverty-stricken area and have one grocery store which was called “Piggly Wiggly.” This really made me laugh.

***Professional change.*** Even though Diana had interacted with people from different cultural and religious spheres such as her high school teachers and college professors and peers, she stated that she had never been in a situation where she had to take leadership in negotiating these differences. At Trident elementary she soon realized that she had to learn how to refine her instructional practices to meet the diverse needs of her students. In addition, she needed to learn how to navigate the diverse cultural landscape of the United States as well.

I have to make it work. I realize that there are things that they view different from me so I try at the same time to appreciate their culture and at the same time try to

share mine. I have taught them not to question someone else's culture, for example, a child may come to me and say "what are you eating? That looks gross." You do not talk like that about someone else's food and you do not talk like that about someone's culture. We have come to that understanding that there are differences and it is our differences that make the world go around. Without differences, this would be a boring world everybody would be seen through the same lens. You appreciate what I have, I appreciate what you have.

The cultural values in the United States are different from Jamaica. In the United States students are given the opportunity to speak to adult or question information given to them, in the Jamaican context teachers still expect some degree of deference from their students. Therefore, when Diana came to the United States and heard the tone in which students spoke to adults with, she was appalled. She, however, revised some of her expectations and her observations became teachable moments.

It was like a culture shock. I remember one day I was walking down the hall and a child said to the principal "hey you" and she answered. I was like that's how it is done here that would never happen back home." After seeing and hearing this, I had to strike a balance between my culture and the culture here. Simple day to day experiences are learning experiences for me, and I use them as an adjustment tool to this new culture.

***Personal change.*** Diana described changes related to family structure and being the 'breadwinner'. She mentioned that she had to leave her family in Jamaica and the extra help she needed was not available anymore. She, therefore, had to find persons she could trust and rely on to help her with her son. These persons she said are mainly

teachers who work at the school. Even though she did not want to constantly ask for favors, she had to create that level of friendship that would feel like family. Just as she would talk to and request assistance from family members in Jamaica she believed that it was necessary to create relationships of that nature with persons in the Trident community.

The regulation that spouses were not allowed to apply for the necessary work documents until six months after having his visa was also a challenge. Her husband had to return to Jamaica and wait until the six months elapsed since her salary could not adequately provide for her small family.

After helping me to get settled, he left the United States because my salary was just not sufficient. Our company told us we would get a certain amount but it was less, far less. The amount of tax was ridiculous. We hardly ever separate back home, we spend all our time together. This was the time that I needed him most. I needed him to help me with my child so that I can concentrate on school stuff such as writing my lesson plans and staying longer in the afternoon working on my classroom.

**Milli-Ann.** As a teacher of Jamaican origin, Milli-Ann was recruited to teach on a J1 exchange visa. This engagement marked her first time working in a United States classroom. However, she previously came to the United States on a J1 student visa to participate in a summer cultural exchange work program while in college. Milli-Ann taught in Jamaica, for four years before migrating to the United States in August 2016 to work at Trident Elementary School. In Jamaica, she was a first-grade teacher. She was appointed as a pre-kindergarten teacher at Trident Elementary. Her reasons for coming to

the United States included to experience cultural differences, financial opportunity and to ensure her children (a son in his final year of high school and a three-year-old daughter) accessed educational opportunities available in the United States. She later realized that the educational opportunities she had anticipated for her son were shattered since he entered the United States on a J2 visa and did not qualify for many of the scholarships that many of the other high school students qualified for as American citizens. She shared that in Jamaica, there were not enough avenues to explore some professions such as engineering since there was very rigorous and competitive selection process that skewed in favor of the top Science students on the island.

Milli-Ann also stated that she had to leave Jamaica because there is a “freeze” on hiring new teachers and the Ministry of Education stated that they would not be employing any new teachers. Like many other teachers, she left the island. Although she was reluctant to leave her family in Jamaica, she eventually came to the United States joined by her husband and children a month later.

***Pedagogical Strength.*** Through classroom observations and interviews, it was noted that Milli-Ann’s pedagogical strength resided in her ability to tailor the lesson to suit all her students. Her students were guided into using their prior knowledge and new experiences to create knowledge. While she facilitated this process, she also created and structured the conditions for learning in her pre-kindergarten classroom. These strengths that she possessed she states is based on the period she taught in Jamaica and feedback she received both as a teacher in training and a cooperating teacher in her home country, Jamaica

People always tell me that I am a good teacher; they said that I do an exceptional job especially with the younger kids. I use a lot of what I learn in college and from my experience back home to work with the students here.

When asked if she had to make a lot of adjustments to teach in the United States Milli-Ann replied

Not much that I need to change I do not think my culture is so much different from the cultural practices in the United States. I make my students aware of this. The colleges in Jamaica teaches us the same basic principles that we can utilize in the US classroom and I apply these principles to teaching. I use different instructional strategies to meet the needs of the children.

Milli-Ann spoke about the American education system, its pedagogy, and assessment as being superior to the education system in her country.

Back in Jamaica, they are trying to copy some of what is done in the schools here because we have the same testing some methods of promoting a child from one grade to the next. Same rigorous testing and if they do not pass they are retained.

***Multiple Experiences as a strength.*** The fact that Milli-Ann has teaching experience both in her native country and the United States seemed to be her major strength. Her ability to provide information about other countries to her pre-kindergarten class and their parents seemed to work well for her interaction with the children and their parents;

Most people I meet are interested to learn about Jamaica. Most people in this community have never been outside of the community. So, telling them you are from a different country and telling them about your culture enlighten them. One

question a person asks me is how did we get here did we drive? I had to explain where Jamaica is in contrasts with where the US is located and how the ocean separates these countries. I show my students a map of the world and these conversations generally act as a springboard for our morning meeting.

Coming from another country Milli-Ann uses her knowledge to create activities that were both culturally relevant and culturally diverse activities both in her classroom and school-wide.

As a part of our program (EPI), we must showcase at least two cultural activities in our school or the community. When I introduce myself in the class and say I am from Jamaica the students start asking questions about Jamaica so I end up showing videos of Jamaica. One thing I did was the introduction of the Jamaican flag. The students colored the flag and compared it to their own and since this is pre-K it goes well with the curriculum I do not have to divert from the teaching. We also use black history month to talk about black leaders in America and those in Jamaica. They had the opportunity to share their black leaders with me so they told me about people like Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks and I tell them about Marcus Garvey.

In Jamaica, Milli-Ann learned the skill of working with limited resources to create lessons that were effective. She opined that in the United States the resources are “not great” but are more than what she had in Jamaica. Therefore, she stated that her practices are more effective in the United States.

The students here have access to more resources than the kids back home. For example, the students here can go to the lab and use a computer back home there



might be a lab but not where every single child can work on their own computer. I learn in Jamaica how to use limited materials to get the best from all students.

You just have to be innovative.

***Classroom management challenges.*** While Milli-Ann's students were only at the Pre-K level, she said their behaviors left much to be desired. She insisted that these behaviors that teachers in the upper grade are experiencing starts at the pre-k level.

The behavioral problems you will see in upper grades starts early. The attitude of the kids and how they talk and behave can be extreme at times. They do not take education seriously. Even though somethings were a little better than I anticipated, it is still bad since this is only Pre-K we should not be experiencing these behaviors. There are issues that at Pre-K that we should not have. These are little kids and little kids should behave like little kids.

***Home school challenges.*** Milli-Ann expressed concern about the parents of the students who never showed up for parent teachers conferences or even visited the classroom to ensure that daily activities are being carried out in an effective and efficient way. She believed the parents who showed up treated her differently than those parents in the Jamaican schools did. She stated that parents in the Jamaican schools showed more interest in their children. For example, if their child is experiencing academic challenges they ask for tips for helping the child at home; Milli-Ann is very passionate about parent involvement because she experienced greater input and cooperation from the parents of students in her previous school. She relates her current experience with parents as follows:

Parents are absent. We do not see the parents we call meetings they do not come. The parents are not actively involved. If they do come they make statements that make you wonder about how they arrive at those conclusions. For example, if you give a child a simple task they will say this is too much for my child to do. If the child has done or said something wrong they will ask ‘where were you when it happen? Did you hear my child? They will even come to conclusion such as you are picking on my child.

***Personal Challenges.*** Milli-Ann came to the United States accompanied by her family. She described many personal challenges. Worries about the financial sustenance of her family and the lack of information in the school district and acquiring the required teaching credentials caused her great anxiety. She still had financial obligations in Jamaica (such as a mortgage) and makes her car payment, rent and all other expenses in the United States which she finds somewhat stressful.

The bills here are very expensive in comparison to Jamaica what we pay here in terms of bills is expensive for example for rent I pay 600 dollars per month. In Jamaica, a \$600 apartment would be a little more upscale and in a nicer neighborhood.

Another problem that Milli-Ann has is the age that younger students are admitted into school. While there seemed to be a simple solution to this issue by putting her child into daycare, Milli-Ann explains that this was a new financial burden that she did not budget for.

The problem was to get my daughter into school because she was born after September. It cost me because I had to put her into daycare. So, it impacts me

financially. In Jamaica she attended pre-school where she was learning. In daycare here, she is not learning.

***Challenges as a pathway for growth.*** Milli-Ann opined that as a teacher she had grown and evolved even though her to-do list never seemed to end. She believed she always had something new to learn or to share and to create some form of strategy or resource. While this may be a challenge for her she noted that it is beneficial to her as she is constantly fitting things together until she finds the right combination that works for her in her classroom. “Each day in the United States brings new challenges, but my multiple experiences allow me to adapt quickly and make changes that create effective classroom environment ensuring that things continue to operate efficiently.”

Milli-Ann states that at both the district and school level she received professional development opportunities covering various topics. Sometimes these professional development sessions may last a day, making her exhausted. She even committed a portion of her summer to attend the districtwide summer institute, which she thought further enhanced her overall growth and improvement in practice. These professional development activities helped to fill gaps in her teaching and provided her with the opportunity to improve in these areas.

Moving from a country where observation and evaluation of a teacher were done but was not as frequent as in the United States posed a challenge for Milli-Ann. Even though she did not mind having someone in her classroom watching her teach, she thought the frequency of these observational visits sometimes caused her to feel uncomfortable especially at the beginning, even though later she became more acclimatized to this reality:

Observation and evaluation are ever going. I receive visits from the principal, literacy coach, district personnel and persons from the state department. At first, I was not sure of what to expect. It was too much. Back home an observation from the principal would be once per month. Prior to her coming into your classroom, you would know that she was coming. Even though I originally saw this as something to fear I am now okay with it. I see it as a chance to grow - to understand what you are lacking and to improve in those areas.

Milli-Ann was not previously aware of the day to day challenges immigrants faced once they left their country of origin and moved to the United States. While most of her challenges were personal, she articulated some professional challenges.

***Navigating the Terrain.*** Milli-Ann as an immigrant teacher was not only learning to teach in a new country but also learning to navigate the policies of the school and how to ensure that she follows all the policies and procedures as set out by the district.

In Jamaica, we can discipline the children more than what we can do here. Some methods we use back home we cannot use them here. But what we do here is basically modify some of our disciplinary measures and they basically have the same effects. For example, in Jamaica, you may put a child outside for timeout which generally works. Here, sometimes even just taking away a privilege is a harsh punishment.

To ensure that the students remained on task Milli-Ann kept a rule and consequence chart at the front of her classroom. She referred to these charts whenever the students showed any form of unacceptable behavior. When asked about behavior management she states;

Here you need proper classroom management I use rules and consequences or I have them removed from the classroom. I remind them daily how to follow the rules. So, a lot of my time that should be spend with instructions I ended up using it correcting behavior.

Milli-Ann states that she does not constantly focus on her challenges but identifies innovative methods to overcome these challenges;

I do not dwell on my challenges. I think of ways in which I can work to make them [challenges] better. For example, I tried to get my daughter into early head start so that it can alleviate some of the financial burdens I am going through.

***Support.*** While Milli-Ann received some financial support from the program and the school level stated that more could be done:

In the program, they assign us a liaison officer who helped us to get settled in that first week. She provided us with options as it relates to transportation. They took us to a car mart to get an expensive car so that when we get to the school district we had transportation. At the district level, they provided us with a loan which will offset some of the cost. The loan at the program level was sent directly to our car for payments and insurance and for telephone because they gave us a phone.

At the district level we got cash that helped us to offset our bills. This we pay back through a monthly deduction.

Milli-Ann thinks that more should be done for her since the kindergarten program in her country of origin was markedly different from the program in the United States

For us professional development regarding teaching pre-k showing me meaningful interaction with four-year-old. With pre-k, it's a little different I have

taught bigger kids so I need examples of how we will teach them to prepare them for kindergarten. Instead, we are told to do something some demonstrations of the requirement is needed.

Milli-Ann spoke highly of her principal providing support whether it be personal or professional. Milli-Ann thinks that the fact that the principal has been exposed to different cultures, through the immigrant from different countries teachers who taught in her school has caused her to have a more positive attitude towards immigrant teachers.

When Milli-Ann was asked what she would do if she was given the opportunity to help first-year immigrant teachers she stated the following;

I know what it is like leaving your country and coming here. I know how hard it is financially especially in that first year. I would offer sessions that help people especially those with family more inexpensive ways of surviving because I went through the process and did not have anyone to help me. So, if you get this information you know I do not need to go high end and get an expensive car. Just showing them how to cope.

***Professional change.*** In Jamaica, most Pre-Kindergarten students come to school already able to read their name, knowing letters, letter sounds, color, and numbers. Milli-Ann mentioned that she found the opposite in her new teaching position:

What we teach as the foundation for the kids for example pre-k is that these kids only recite the ABC they are not taught in-depth because they say at pre-k we are just preparing them for kindergarten so most of the day is for play and they even have nap time. In Jamaica, we do not have that as soon as we get them into the school we start teaching. As early as they are three years old. Here it's more

babysitting because we are preparing them for kindergarten. So many of them leaving pre-k can't write or do not know their names because it is not required. But in Jamaica, we have to teach them certain skills at this stage before they can move on.

She decided that it was necessary to change the way that she taught in Jamaica by providing a less structured teaching environment that would fulfill the state department requirement of Pre-K students. She is however adamant that there are skills that she still thinks they should learn and of such she will provide the learning environment that will enable these students as they got older.

As a teacher in Jamaica, there are aspects of teaching that Milli-Ann has learned through college and professional development. In the United States, on the other hand, she has realized that a lot of her learning is from her doing her own research.

I have to do research on their education system. I must find out what it is that I need to do and the different steps I need to take in some of these processes. In the US learning is continuous, you never stop learning. I had to do "read to succeed" courses. This course taught me different methods to teach not only reading but content subjects also. I learned a lot about different ways to present the text that will make it more interesting.

**Arlene.** Arlene came to the United States alone but was later joined by her mother who has permanent US resident status (green card). She taught in in a rural school in Jamaica for three years before coming to the United States. While Arlene had not started her own family, she stated that she missed the friends she has in Jamaica and eagerly anticipated school holidays so that she would be able to return and visit them. She

learned about the J1 visa program through a mutual friend who told her to explore the possibilities of going to the United States as many teachers across Jamaica were opting out of teaching in that country due to low wages and lack of adequate resources for student's success. She described the visa process for her was very stressful and time-consuming as it required many different steps such as an interview with the recruitment agency (EPI) and the school district, filling out various forms and emailing materials required for the process such as police record and personal bank financial statements. While the program was advertised as totally free, there were some costs associated with getting required documentation. For example, Arlene stated that she had to pay for her police record (a document that verified that she has no criminal convictions in Jamaica) twice as the first document expired before she received a US visa interview appointment.

Arlene was assigned to teach third grade and indicated that she spent much of her extra time including some weekends in the classroom to ensure that everything necessary to make an impact on students learning was put in place. Arlene stated:

My past experiences prepared me as they are some things that are similar wherever you are, like the way you communicate with students. Basic things such as homework and some teaching strategies are basically the same.

Arlene saw herself working in this field for many years and she expressed her love and enthusiasm for teaching in staff development sessions and during be formally or informal teaching observations.

***Pedagogical Strength.*** Arlene could be described one of those teachers who was extremely reserved and I found that she did not express herself openly unless she felt comfortable. I did several reviews of her lesson plans and spoke to her a lot before



observing her classroom interactions as I wanted her to feel comfortable with the idea of me coming to observe her teaching.

Arlene's classroom had different areas such as Reading, Science, Social Studies, and Math. The students in her class seemed to be aware of the classroom rules but occasionally broke them. Arlene generally expressed her dissatisfaction by calling their names and reinforcing the rules. Her books in her reading corners were separated according to the different genres. I noticed that her children's literature covered a range of cultures and ideas. When I asked her about this, she explained that in her previous job in her home country it was stressed that books that are provided for students should depict the diversity of the population. After coming to the United States, she still used this idea as she knew that it was a very effective thing to do as students seemed to show more interest in the books when they could see different groups of people represented in them.

Most posters in her classroom were teacher made with the help of the students. She stated that in her home country creating posters with the class was the norm as resources are limited and teachers must use whatever they can put together to help students learn. Coming to the United States she has brought that idea with her and to her surprise, this was being embraced in the United States and referred to as "anchor charts." She stated that in Jamaica those charts helped her students remember concepts that were taught months or days before as students go back to the charts to remind themselves of these concepts.

Arlene used different approaches to learning, through visual materials, demonstrations and hands-on activities. Student feedback through exit tickets was also

used on numerous occasions. These exit tickets she used to have students summarize their learning, after reading through them she stated they helped to surface students' misconceptions and confusion. This seemed to help her to identify concepts and ideas she may need to re-teach or which students she needs to meet with small groups. Arlene says she is dependent on her exit tickets as they stand to ensure her that learning is occurring each day.

Arlene promoted acceptable behaviors through classroom discussion like making students aware that, "everyone's ideas are important," and "all ideas must be treated respectfully." Throughout her lesson, she constantly reinforced these norms. When asked about the reason for constantly reinforcing this, she stated that at the beginning of the school year most students would giggle if another student had a wrong answer or made comments that would cause the other student to feel offended which generally escalated into a confrontation.

While she deviated from the written lesson plan during her teaching she allowed her students' questions to drive her lesson. She seemed to know who the students who were having difficulty with the content and often provided one-on-one support.

At the front of Arlene's class was a data-tracking board where she tracked students' information for different classwork and benchmark tests. When asked about her numbering system on the chart she explained that this was a method used to ensure anonymity. Each student had a folder with all the information regarding their own data. It has all the information showing their growth over the period since beginning the class. Arlene became interested in tracking students' progress when she participated in a

professional development on data-driven instruction and thought that this could positively impact her students.

In an analysis of Arlene's lesson plans I realized that the lessons written at the beginning of the school year were missing some key elements such as the idea of "gradual release", objectives in line with standard and assessment activities that are aligned to the standard, this was also explained by the literacy coach who stated,

Toward the latter part of the school year, I started seeing that shift in their planning. It [lesson plan] had aspects of working with words, differentiated and doing the guided reading and vocabulary and fluency is evident. There was less focus on grammar and more focus on the components of reading. They were now using read aloud, shared reading and not so much silent reading but more independent reading.

Arlene was very proud of her students' growth as the data show that they all gained on the school-wide map testing and the benchmark testing. This she said has put a smile on her face to know that her hard work had paid off.

***Multiple Experiences as strength.*** Arlene firmly believed in the contribution of Jamaican immigrant teachers to U.S. education for their unique cultural backgrounds. She expressed gratitude for being in the United States and being different because being different meant that she could always bring something unique to the classroom.

I think what I knew before I came here as a teacher was very important with how I teach. I mean it's your first year you will not start adapting everything that is thrown your way. So, my experiences I had before coming here really helped me to move my students. Sometimes I have to look to my culture to come up with

strategies to correct behavior. Many of my instructional practices are linked to my culture like I will tell stories or sing songs to make information clear to students.

As a Jamaican immigrant, Arlene shared the culture of her country with the class. She also shared the culture of other countries, since she stated that as a student she had learned about cultures from other countries.

I share my culture by showing videos and talk to them [my students] about the differences between here and Jamaica and you know they ask a lot of questions. Sometimes in the morning before class starts, we talk about different things in my culture.

***Classroom management challenges.*** Like the other immigrant teachers in the study Arlene saw classroom control as one of her major challenges;

Initially, I had problems with classroom control because I had this student who would disrupt the class she will start and then the others will just start disrupting as well and it doesn't matter what I did it was very hard to control the class. After this child was removed from the class it got a lot better.

She stated that there were some differences that between these students when compared with students in her home country:

The students here are different from what I am accustomed to, kids back home will not stand and saying I am not doing that. They (Jamaican children) are different towards the teacher they show respect. Here they are more in your face. It is very hard to deal with students who speak to you in this way especially when it is something you are not used to. It is hard for teachers to accept this behavior whether you are from the United States or elsewhere. The students behave

differently. Students back home follow rules and guidelines more than here. Our rules back home are harsher than here. For example, there are certain ways students can wear their hair, they must wear a uniform every day and only certain color shoes. Here they are free and they have simple rules but they do not want to follow them. I do not think they would be able to survive in certain countries because they can't follow some simple rules. Here the students they are different. I do not think you can really prepare for an experience unless you know about it before then be on the lookout for those things as they come.

***Curriculum challenges.*** Lesson plans writing was highlighted by Arlene as an issue since the format was different from the way it was done in Jamaica. She believed that a lesson plan that would take thirty minutes to write in Jamaica would take approximately two hours in her new context.

I also I had challenges writing lesson plans because the structure is different from where I am from. Challenges with how to deconstruct the standard and let them fit with the needs of my students have also been an issue.

This was extended by the literacy coach who stated that;

Originally, they [immigrant teachers] were having problems with planning using the idea of Balanced Literacy. Therefore, you would see more grammar skills like the nouns, adjectives, pronouns. So, they are not realizing that you should teach aspects of comprehension.

Arlene's own recollection at the beginning of her first year was that she felt highly anxious. She experienced challenges to utilize time management strategies that were taught to her in the initial meeting geared towards new teachers. She later realized that

she needed to relearn and reorient herself to restore the confidence she had in teaching from her home country. Arlene enrolled for several webinars especially those dealing with classroom challenges for the novice teacher. Even though she was a veteran teacher in her home country she viewed herself as a novice in the United States and has opted to do anything to improve her skills as a teacher.

***Credential and Praxis Examination.*** Arlene did not mind the process of her documents going through the credential process as most of it was done through her agent and the only role she played was submitting these documents. However, it was not that easy to pass the Praxis exam. She sat this examination twice and her scores were nowhere close to her passing the test. She attributed her lack of success to her slow typing in an environment where responses are timed.

I do not have anything positive to say about this test. I do not like the test I think it is set up in a way to make you fail. My opinion you pay and you go and then you find out it's a computer-based timed test. You have to read some lengthy passages with time being a factor you are bound to fail. Some of the concepts are too Americanized.

She explained the school district's change of policy in the Praxis where they will pay for the immigrant teachers to take the exam which would offset the cost for these teachers. However, they would pay for one sitting. This was implemented when these four immigrant teachers in the district sat the examination and did not pass and the district paid for them the second time. Arlene made the following recommendations for the district and ultimately the state of South Carolina:

They should arrange something for us where we can sit and understand a concept. For example, at a college or university. The student teachers in the United States get this opportunity to go to classes and take courses, therefore improving their chances of passing the test.

***Personal challenges.*** Arlene's personal problems compounded her professional challenges. Many times, she described herself reflecting on her problems at a time when she should have been engaged during instructional workshops.

Most of my challenges were at the beginning of the school year. For example, finding somewhere to live. Even driving on these huge highways which are not that prominent coming from Jamaica. It was hard to find a place to live. I think when all the first set of professional development meetings I hardly heard anything as my mind was occupied elsewhere. However, after getting a place [to live] and I felt better.

Arlene sometimes expressed nostalgic sentiments towards her home country and expressed sporadic feelings of isolation and loneliness.

I had to leave friends and family back home. and I have realized it is a lot harder to make friends in the United States. Even though I have family who can visit it is not the same. You tend to feel lonely. Especially when you are used to having people who you are used to and you do not have them around you anymore you tend to get lonely.

***Challenges as a pathway for growth.*** While Arlene viewed the myriad of professional development activities and meetings as more work. She shared that she

really enjoyed building on her professional knowledge as a teacher through her participation in these meetings and hence focuses on the positives.

In the US there are so many meeting you must attend IEP meetings, Professional development, grade level meeting, district level meeting. Also, whatever you do you have to document it to show that you are really doing it. In my home country if you engage in a task, talking about it and explaining is enough. You do not need to show documentation. For any given school year teachers will have three to five meetings and that's it unless an emergency meeting is called and this hardly ever happens.

Arlene contextualized the struggle that she experienced with the curriculum as a means of growth, as she became knowledgeable in both curriculum of Jamaica and the curriculum of South Carolina. When teaching she drew from both curriculums. For example, she states:

The curriculum that I am used to teaching back home uses more of an integrated approach. Here subjects are stand alone. [Here] you integrate by using your initiative.” This makes my lessons a little more dynamic as I get good information by merging the two.

***Navigation strategies.*** Arlene evolved her own strategies by drawing from her international experience and fusing them with experiences she gained in South Carolina. “I have to come up with strategies to help me to deal with classroom and school issues. These are strategies I sometimes create on the spot and some I took from my home country.”



As Arlene attempted to help children follow rules and guide them she came under much scrutiny from their parents, however, she did not let this demotivate her she explained;

I make my students and parents aware or know what I stand for. At the same time, I listen and make sure I understand what they are trying to say. I sometimes ask my students to repeat something that they say as you know that have words that are different in our culture and means something else.

As a new teacher, Arlene was expected to take full control of her class on the very first day, because of this she sometimes felt overwhelmed. However, to take control of this feeling of anxiety and feeling stressed Arlene explained

I talk to people as this helps to relieve my stress. I ask for help if I need it. The people here are very helpful, they will not just see you doing something and not provide a helping hand. I also had a mentor who guided me. When I was not sure of what to do like lesson planning she was there to help me.

**Support.** In terms of support, Arlene stated that there was no formal support system. While there were people who would help her, there was no one who would help her to find housing or help her do things that will impact her personally. She had an orientation with her agent (EPI) but it was less of a support and more of reprimand before the fact.

Different people helped by telling me where I could look for an apartment but nothing formal. Just people helping. At the district level, we had induction I would not say it prepared me for life in the United States. I just had information given to me that I can use in the classroom. Additionally, upon arriving in the

United States I had an orientation with EPI which was my very first orientation. This prepared me for the life in the US. We did this orientation for three to five days. They told us about the things they were offering such as health insurance as well as what to expect and what we are not supposed to do and what we can do. It's more like the laying down of rules. They informed us of things that could jeopardize our visa such as looking for another job outside of teaching.

When Arlene was asked about providing support for the first-year immigrant teachers she stated that,

First, I would conduct a kind of survey to find out what the immigrant teachers need then I would use that as a springboard. For example, a good professional development I think we should have received was the school district guiding us through a process of writing lesson plans, going through the various steps. They should also give us ideas about some challenges we may face as an immigrant teacher. I mean, at the school there are immigrant teachers who came before us they could use them to update us on some of what we can expect in the classroom. Instead, we are brought together as one group; immigrant teachers and American teachers. Some are first-year, some experienced and they give us the same professional development. I mean even though I have several years of experience in my home country it cannot be compared to an American teacher who attended school in the US and has taught in the US even as a teacher in training. All our needs are different.

***Professional change.*** While Arlene effectively connected and adapted skills from her previous teaching role in Jamaica to her new positions in this school there are some

areas that she had to make great changes. For example, Arlene was confronted by a more diverse group of students than she was exposed to in her Jamaican context. Her lesson and all classroom activities had to be planned with these students in mind. Additionally, her lessons should be modified to allow for empathy and accommodation of those students' needs.

When I was in Jamaica I was required to differentiate to meet the needs of my students. Here differentiation takes on a whole new meaning, I must plan for the ELL student, the student with cultural differences, those with IEP, those with emotional issues and those who have other special accommodations. Sometimes I am not sure where to start so I do mini research to see what is going on in these areas. Back home I did not have to worry about all of the differences I may look at those who are struggling and plan a lesson for high low and medium groups and that's it.

Arlene also found herself working as a team player exchanging strategies with teachers in her team at different grade levels. This approach was different from what she was accustomed to doing in her home country

We did a lot of grade level meetings at these meetings I would express my concern about the student's behavior another student at my grade level spoke to me about some things I needed to do to help them improve their behavior. By the end of the school year, my students' behavior problems were about seventy percent less and that is a lot. I also provided her with strategies on how to teach long division. At one point I had her class come to me so I could teach them.

Arlene's exchanging of ideas was evident in this American teacher's class who had displays of Jamaican colors and a map of Jamaica.

***Personal change.*** Arlene had to make many personal changes which sometimes affected her school life. Especially during the early period of her migrating to the United States. She was struggling with her day to day life in this new country she described her feelings as sad and miserable. She was at such a distance from her family and missed being with them during that period.

At first, Arlene did not have any friends in the United States to support her emotionally. Hence, she had to make friends with her co-workers. At first, these friendships were limited only to her workplace but later it was extended beyond this boundary.

She started spending special holidays and day off away from home. Teachers at the school started acting more as family.

At first, I felt sad and miserable. As the time went on and I got friendlier with the teachers especially an [American] teacher on my grade level. We got very friendly we spend a lot of our free time together with her and her family. I would say she kind of took me under her wings. If you knew me before you would know that I am a loner I spend most of my time by myself. This was a welcome change.

**Cultural awareness and cultural fluidity.** Arlene summarized her exposure to different cultures before coming to the United States as follows;

Apart from having teachers from different cultural groups who taught me in high school who were from different countries. I did not really have a lot of

experiences with differences before coming here and I did not even look at it as an experience that I needed to savor. We also did not see these teachers as different except that they had like an Indian or Chinese accent and that's about it. When Arlene came to the United States there were some things that were surprising to her, after she completed her first year she started understanding features that were embedded in the students' culture which she used for teachable moments

I deal with the difference by asking questions. For example, if a child should say or do something that may be shocking to me I may ask if that is normal behavior. I have seen boys come to school wearing two earrings. At first, I had to control myself so I do not make a comment. By the end of the school year, it was normal for me and they were used as big parts of my lessons.

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings were presented using each participant and their narratives along with observation information. While all the participants' responses fell under each broad theme, differences existed within the subthemes. In summarizing my findings, I will provide a comparison of the immigrant teachers profile along with the summary of findings for each research questions. Table 4.1 provides a snapshot summary of findings.

Table 4.1. Summary of Research findings for the four immigrant Jamaican elementary teachers.

| Research Questions  | Themes     | Sub-themes   | Manifestations   |
|---|------------|--|--|
| What are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths that Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers bring with them? | Strengths  | Pedagogical Strength   | Teaching practice  |
|   |            | Multiple Experience as a strength                              | Merging ideas  |
|   |            | Cultural Awareness and Fluidity                                | Ability to use students background   |
| How do Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe the challenges and navigational strategies they use in their school?            | Challenges | Classroom Management   | Disruptive students  |
|   |            | Home School Challenges   | Disconnect between parents and school  |
|   |            | Curriculum Challenges  | Inability to understand lesson plans, etc.   |
|   |            | Lack of diverse knowledge by Native teachers and staff members | Discriminatory and stereotypical comments  |
|   |            | Credential and Praxis  | Only one of the four teachers has passed the Praxis after the second sitting for all participants. |
|   |            | Challenges as a pathway to growth                              | Immigrant teachers using their challenges to their advantage                                       |
|   |            | Personal Challenges  | Financial, family, transportation  |

| Research Questions   | Themes                 | Sub-themes           | Manifestations  |
|--|------------------------|----------------------|---|
|  | Navigating the Terrain | Strategies           | Reflecting  |
|  |                        | Support              | Mentoring, professional Development                               |
| What personal or professional changes do these Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers encounter during their time in southeastern South Carolina? | Changes                | Professional Changes | Teaching strategies<br>Networking<br>Researching<br>Collaboration |
|  |                        | Personal Changes     | Changes in the Family structure                                   |

### **Comparison of Immigrant teachers' profile**

While the participants in the research were all immigrants, they proffered different reasons for migrating to the United States and how they navigated the teaching terrain in the United States. The teachers' years of service before coming to the United States ranged from four to thirteen years. However, it was unclear whether their years of experience influenced the way they negotiated the task of teaching in a new country.

### **Immigrant Jamaican teachers' qualities and strengths**

“what are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths that Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers bring with them?”

**Strengths.** The immigrant Jamaican teachers' strengths helped them to survive the challenges and in some cases, excel in their roles as teachers the United States. Throughout the interviews and classroom observations, it was evident that many of the immigrant teachers had similar experiences and responses as they encountered teaching

practices that were unlike their own. The teachers had classroom routines that helped them to seamlessly move from one activity to another.

In general, the teachers agreed that having a different cultural background from the students and teachers strengthened their practice as classroom teachers and as collaborators. This development was deemed a positive attribute since these immigrant teachers seemed to possess a broader range of experiences, creating manifestations of empathy and cultural awareness. Moreover, some of these immigrant teachers searched for additional opportunities to expand their knowledge in classroom practice.

The immigrant teachers spoke of and demonstrated the importance of flexibility and adaptability while teaching in their new environment. They attributed the success of their teaching to their openness to different teaching styles, new techniques they acquired in the United States and using skills they gained previously as teachers in their home country. It is because of these attributes they could help students make significant gains on their benchmark and MAP test.

Immigrant Jamaican teachers' challenges and navigational strategies

“How do Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe the challenges and navigational strategies they use in their school?”

**Challenges.** Classroom management was a recurring challenge identified among these Jamaican immigrant teachers. These Jamaican immigrant teachers attributed this to a lack of respect that students showed toward teachers and administrators, this they described as being embedded in the culture of these students. They also described challenges with parents who are of a different culture and on most occasions, have opposing notions on how classroom behavioral issues should be handled.



The participants held common assumptions on the attitude and role of parents in the education of their children. Based on participants' previous interaction with parents in their home country, they assumed that parents would be supportive and willing to communicate with them. However, the participants were disappointed by the challenges they faced in promoting meaningful interactions with parents. While they believed their American counterparts had similar challenges, they believed that their challenges with the parents were more pronounced.

Another challenge that some of these immigrant teachers faced can be characterized as prejudice and discrimination from both students and staff members. Participants' first impressions of the severity of this prejudice were tempered by the passage of time and relationships they forged with more compassionate Americans. However, participants observed that in no case when an American staff member openly displayed discriminatory behaviors to their migrant counterparts, were they reprimanded by their supervisors. Even though these could have been used as teachable moments on diversity and inclusion, these were not seized by the school leaders. The Jamaican immigrant teachers, however, described how they devised methods to share their cultural and other differences by introducing lessons using songs and dance from home and other countries, using diverse pictures for posters and PowerPoint presentations and using anecdotes about different gender and racial issues that would aid in understanding, appreciation and tolerance.

Taking and passing the Praxis exam was also a challenge since all four immigrant teachers. After taking the Praxis, they had to retake it a second time, with only one passing to date. They perceived that the questions on the test were culturally biased.

Therefore, a teacher who was trained and previously taught outside of the United States would not understand the jargon used in this test and would likely end up failing.

Participants also shared several personal challenges ranging from the lack of support as they grappled with in a new country and a new culture. This was compounded by unexpected financial issues. Of the four teachers interviewed, two stated that they were having financial issues because of the cost of living in America and their inability to pay for childcare and at the same time take care of financial obligations they still had in their home country.

The immigrant teachers in the study construed challenges as important catalysts for their professional growth. These challenges included curriculum issues, time-consuming reading courses, meetings and the numerous other professional development activities. They explained that these issues have helped them improve their teaching practices and give them a broader worldview especially as it related to identifying differences and catering to the student's needs. It must be noted that professional development was taken seriously by all the Jamaican immigrant teachers in the study, all of whom actively used opportunities to learn and develop their practice.

**Navigating the Terrain.** Like all teachers, immigrant Jamaican teachers dealt with their personal issues while they simultaneously negotiated their professional roles and responsibilities in an unfamiliar cultural context. The participants described means of overcoming the challenges including forming alliances with their fellow teachers as personal and professional support networks. Since they were away from their families these teachers helped them negotiate the day to day challenges they faced.

The immigrant teachers stated that American teachers formed a family bond with them and help them to deal with the everyday challenges of being a migrant teacher. All the immigrant teachers in the interviews stated that the principal played an important supportive role in their lives on both personal and professional matters.

**Immigrant Jamaican teachers’ personal or professional changes.** “What personal or professional changes do these Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers encounter during their time in southeastern South Carolina?” While the immigrant teachers were aware that the students in the classroom experienced changes since they are taught by teachers from a different country, they are also aware that they themselves underwent changes.

Upon migrating to the United States, these immigrant Jamaican teachers left behind in their home country well-established social support networks such as family, friends and neighborhood institutions (e.g., church and community centers). To help them to navigate this new cultural landscape and social norms they forged friendships with native teachers. They developed new “family” bonds which helped them to navigate both professional and personal challenges.

It is evident that immigrant teachers adjusted the way they taught and interacted with students since they were interacting different population from that of their home country. The situation is that in the United States the students’ population is more diverse. This required more from these teachers since these immigrant teachers were mandated to plan with this diversity in mind to meet the needs of all students.

The immigrant Jamaican teachers worked more as a group and less as individual actors. They engaged in team planning and informal mentoring of each other which gave

them greater opportunities to contribute their strengths and expertise. In addition, it also helped them to expand their knowledge as they learned from others within their team.

### **Conclusion**

Chapter four presented the findings based on data collected from the four Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers. The purpose of the case study, research questions, description of the population, data collection and analysis were all restated in this chapter. The findings were presented as themes for the four different participants. The major findings were then summarized. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings of this study, the implications and make suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Summary and Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter concludes the qualitative case study of four immigrant Jamaican teachers working in a rural southeastern South Carolina Elementary School. The chapter begins with an overview of the study purpose, research questions, methodology and a discussion of the theory that underpins the study. The discussion entails an analysis of the major findings. Implications and recommendations for future studies as well as concluding observations are also documented.

#### **Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the curriculum perspectives and experiences of Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers and how they responded to a new teaching environment in southeastern South Carolina. By examining the experiences of these four Jamaican immigrant teachers, Marlene, Diana, Milli-Ann and Arlene, I attempted to gather and process responses to the following research questions: What are Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers' experiences as they navigate the curriculum landscape in the United States of America? My sub-questions were: How do Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe the challenges as they navigate the curriculum landscape of the United States? What are the manifestations and self-narrative of qualities and strengths that Jamaican immigrant elementary school

teachers bring with them? What personal or professional changes do these immigrant teachers encounter during their time in the United States?

The four case studies of Marlene, Diana, Milli-Ann and Arlene discussed in the previous chapter demonstrated the uniqueness of each participant's experiences at Trident Elementary School and at the same time identifies some similarities.

### **Methodology Summary**

A qualitative case study approach was used for this study with observation, interview, and analysis of artifacts as data collecting methods. As mentioned in Chapter 3, interview questions were designed and tested prior to the interviews. Qualitative Content analysis (Mayring, 2000) was used to analyze the data collected. Data gathered were analyzed concurrently these were coded and themes and patterns emerged which were combined to create major themes. The analysis was based on the participating teachers' perceptions through their emerging stories, which focused on their unique experiences as immigrant teachers and were deconstructed to reveal the repeated themes that arose through shared experiences.

### **Summary of Theory**

The theoretical perspectives that guided my inquiry were critical race theory, the theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, acculturation theory and fictive kin network. Critical race theory as proposed by Ladson-Billings was used as an analytical tool to understand schools' inequity, in this research the focus was on the school's curriculum and instruction. The findings suggest that the Eurocentric curriculum still provided a dominant base for the immigrant teachers' practice. While the participants in the study diverted minimally from traditional curriculum and instructional practices, participants

revealed that there is little room to deviate from the curriculum based on the testing requirements of the school. If one agrees with Ladson-Billings, the participants in this study, immigrant teachers are also too heavily focused on the idea of the curriculum which is a tenet of the critical race theory.

The theory of culturally relevant pedagogy, according to Ladson-Billings (2009), is an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes. She opined that a classroom practicing cultural relevant pedagogy should possess the following: communication of high expectations, active teaching methods, teacher as facilitator, the inclusion of culturally and linguistically knowledge, diverse students, cultural sensitivity, reshaping the curriculum, student-controlled classroom, discourse, small group instruction and academically related discourse. In the classrooms observed, the teachers were utilizing various components of culturally relevant pedagogy. Interestingly, the teachers did not mention the term culturally relevant pedagogy in explaining their instructional practices.

Acculturation entailed the process in which members of one cultural group espouse the beliefs and behaviors of another group. Acculturation is usually skewed in the direction of a minority group who adopts the habits and language patterns of the dominant group. However, the opposite can be true where the dominant culture also adapts language and beliefs from the minority culture. Both were evident in my research findings. The migrant teachers shared elements of their Jamaican culture with their students. While some participants staunchly articulated the importance of retaining their home culture, they also used aspects of the culture in this American school district to

communicate more effectively in their new professional and personal environments. This is not surprising since Berry (1980) states that in acculturation you can either assimilate or reject a culture. While some respondents verbally rejected the new culture, it was evident that they were also assimilating aspects of the new culture. In other words, the acculturation process was recursive with a heavier emphasis on teacher transmitting their culture than consciously assimilating the culture of the host country.

Lastly, I engaged the theory of fictive kinship to understand the changes immigrant teachers experienced as they left their relatives in Jamaica. They formed new relationships with persons in the United States who were not related to them by blood. It is important to note that fictive kinship was an important factor in the creation and retention of family integrity among African-Americans during slavery and even though families were fragmented through the capturing and transporting to the western world, the enslaved Africans would eventually become affiliated with other African groups hence creating fictive kinship ties. This type of relationship served to broaden mutual support networks and create a sense of community (Billingsley, 1992). In this study, fictive kinship is adapted to refer to a form of extended family networks and a social support network among immigrant teachers and other immigrant teachers but more so with their American counterparts. The friendships they developed seemed to provide a buffer for the absence of their family and close friends in Jamaica. This provides a stark contrast to the tensions described where the teachers feel stereotyped by other Americans.

### **Interpretation of Results**

During the analysis of the data, four major themes and related sub-themes emerged. Although these four themes were discussed separately, it is important to note



that they were not mutually exclusive. These themes are intertwined with their subthemes further forming interconnectedness among each other that will help us understand the pedagogy of the Jamaican immigrant teachers in southeastern South Carolina.

Specifically, how these Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers describe and manifest their strengths, the challenges they face and how they navigate the curriculum landscape as they teach and learn and the changes they encounter during their first-year in South Carolina. It also provided insights on how they transformed their challenges and tailored them to become strengths.

In chapter four, the themes and subthemes were presented as finding for individual participants. In this chapter, I present my interpretation of my result as themes and subthemes, I draw on my theoretical framework and literature to explicate the findings.

**Pedagogical Strength.** The immigrant teachers came to the United States as experienced teachers from Jamaica with experiences ranging from four to thirteen years. Respondents valued these years of experience as a springboard and training ground for their migrant teacher experiences.

All four immigrant teachers in the study utilized various teaching strategies such as explicit instruction, modeling, gradual release, guided practice, pair work, group work, individualized instructions through one-on-one, song dance and games. The materials they use to aid in lesson understanding are pictures, posters, storybooks, charts, as well as different objects to attract students' attention and spark their learning interest. All the teachers had books that showed diverse population however only two of the teachers made mention of it during their interview. Ladson-Billings (2009) explains that culturally

relevant teachers, like these Jamaican immigrant teachers, connect teaching and learning to the community, national and global identities of their students.

The teachers frequently asked the students questions and always encouraged them to express their own opinions. There was evidence that the students were accustomed to answering these types of questions as none of the students seemed to hesitate when they were called on. In Diana's class after guided practice, she interacted with students on a one-on-one basis. She valued this interaction as important since students needed this form of instruction to cater to their diverse ways of learning. This was aptly discussed by Gibson, (1998) who states "In our multicultural society, culturally responsive teaching reflects democracy at its highest level. It means doing whatever it takes to ensure that every child is achieving and ever moving toward realizing their potential." In Arlene's class, the students through their teacher's efforts were aware that all ideas were accepted.

In each class, the students seemed interested in lessons and were eager to answer their teacher's questions. The interactions I observed in each classroom demonstrated consonance with Ladson-Billings' theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. In Diana's and Marlene's classes, they showed the students dance moves from Jamaica and then had the students showing them their own dance moves accompanied by their songs. Drawing from critical race theory it is evident that in Diana and Marlene's class, the use of African-American and Jamaican dance and music served as counter-narratives to dominant narratives and ideologies in the classroom. Students could see that their culture was valued and apart from that the music and movement from their dance and the Jamaican dance were similar and therefore served to concretize Diana's and Milli-Ann's similarities of the African American and Jamaican history. The African retentions within

the music of Jamaicans and African Americans symbolize and support the culturally relevant perspective within the Black community that is often on the periphery and not highlighted in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2009). When these students are able to experience music, they are accustomed to hearing in their homes and communities and their teacher is accepting of their culture, it builds their esteem and helps them acknowledge and accept their own culture.

Diana also taught students to count in Spanish and say Spanish words such as good morning and good evening, as there were some ESOL students at the school. They used words from the students' language in their conversations. This according to Ladson-Billings (2009) facilitates their cultural competence.

Immigrant teachers such as Marlene and Diana were more aware of teaching in the United States context as Diana has taught in a United States based school in her country this school has helped to propel her knowledge on pedagogical practices in the South Carolina classroom. This demonstrated that immigrant teachers' past teaching experience could also be very valuable during the process of their adaptation to a new teaching environment. Diana on the other hand, did her master's degree at a Florida based university which enhanced her ability to work well in this context. Conversely, the case of Arlene and Milli-Ann demonstrated that the lack of similar past teaching experience could be a disadvantage for any immigrant teacher when they migrate to a new country and hence a new context.

**Multiple experiences as a strength.** As was mentioned earlier all the teachers in the study had prior experience in their home country. In addition, they all received pre-service teacher education in their native country. Therefore, the experience they brought

to the United States tended to be enriching for both students and staff of the host school alike. These teachers drew on their experiences from their native country and intertwined them with the learning they gain in the United States. Kailasanathan (2006) emphasized the benefits of the diverse pedagogical knowledge that immigrant teachers brought to schools. He stated that they possess the expertise to combine effective learning practices from their home countries with effective teaching practices in the new country to enrich these schools with a diverse pedagogy. This was seen on numerous occasions in the participant's classrooms where they would utilize strategies from the Jamaican context with those in the United States. In one instance, one participant stated that some methods they utilized in their home country they had to totally discard as these were not acceptable in the United States.

All the teachers spoke of the unique opportunities they offered students in their classroom to experience the Jamaican culture. A teacher from the same culture might be able to explain other cultures to these students. However, they would not be able to provide firsthand accounts of these cultures. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that the immigrant teachers were better able to provide the type of culturally relevant pedagogy which was mentioned by Banks (2003). Su (1996) asserts that culturally diverse teachers are more likely to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy than teachers of the dominant cultural or ethnic group.

**Challenges.** All four teachers in the study found classroom management as a major challenge since they had come to encounter different students from those they taught in their home country. These students presented behavioral issues that were viewed as highly undesirable by the immigrant teachers., These behavioral issues they

encounter included; talking back, disrespectful and loud talking and lacking respect for classroom rules. These behaviors were described as a culture shock by one participant who stated that she had never encountered such behavioral issues before. The respected roles that they held in their home country made their American students' behavioral patterns more daunting (Ross 2003). This is not surprising since many researchers have described similar behavioral patterns what the immigrant teachers generally found in the American classroom. Although the immigrant teachers spoke about these challenging behaviors I did not observe any behavioral problems during my classroom observations. This was probably attributable to my years of experience in the American classroom versus the lenses of new immigrant teachers who had wistful recollections of their home country.

***Home School Challenges.*** Challenges concerning parental involvement in their children's education were highlighted by two participants. These challenges are typical in contexts like Trident Elementary as many studies involving low income communities have (e.g., O'Connor, 2001, Abrams & Gibbs, 2002) noted this challenge. This lack of parental involvement only leaves these students further behind academically since the parent conferences that were organized by the immigrant teachers were focused on giving their children extra hours before or after school.

***Personal Challenges.*** Personal challenges such as financial problems were recurrent themes throughout the research. However, it seemed as if immigrant teachers with families were the ones who had greater financial challenges. The timeline required for the spouse to receive work authorization and find a job added further financial strain on the immigrant teachers whose salary must take care of all the persons in the

household. Trident Elementary school is situated in a low-income area. As such, the living accommodations do not live up to expected standards. Immigrant teachers reported having to search for houses which can take up to weeks. One teacher states that she spent the first part of the school year living in a hotel. This type of arrangement will affect how the teacher teaches as this can lead to teachers being depressed. Coming from a country where some teachers experienced better housing solutions cause immigrant teachers to prematurely return to their home country.

***Challenges as a pathway for growth.*** The immigrant Jamaican teachers described feelings of being overwhelmed curriculum-related activities. These included adjusting curriculum changes and the myriad of professional development professional development activities they participated in. While they all seemed to embrace the new pedagogies and content knowledge, they cited time constraints and lofty school district expectations as sources of discontent.

This idea of “getting it right” seemed embedded in the immigrant teacher’s methods of teaching as this is how they were taught using the British model in their own country. These teachers viewed the curriculum document as an important source that contained all materials necessary for students’ intellectual growth and development. Therefore, they want to make sure they were doing what was expected of them - implementing the programs that are required by the school.

Some research participants thought that teaching in South Carolina would be like teaching in the Jamaican context where they could integrate the content and teach in a manner that would match the students’ interest and integrate more cultural and race in their teaching. The opposite was true as they find themselves being able to do few

cultural related activities only during downtime. In some cases, they tried to engage in integration where they identified possibilities in the curriculum. Administrators or district personal hardly ever spoke about integrating their culture in their teaching but more about test scores and grading. Arlene underscored that she came from an open education system where the curriculum was integrated and not fragmented into different areas, which made planning lesson and teaching a task easier to handle.

***Insensitivity to diversity.*** The immigrant teachers described incidents of discrimination both blatant and subtle. The lack of diverse knowledge is evident as the American teachers and other members of staff seemed oblivious to the added pressure immigrant teachers described caused by their stereotypical and sometimes outright discriminatory statements and actions. Two teachers in the study did not report any incident of stereotype and discrimination. However, seemed that the two teachers who did were more integrated into the mainstream culture and were better able to detect discriminatory comments. These teachers detailed several instances where their American colleagues attempted to exercise their mainstream power to silence and discredit them. They felt uncomfortable being labeled because of their background. They expressed puzzlement over the fact that some American teachers made stereotypical comments about nationality. Perhaps, American teachers were exposed to immigration stories where all immigrants fled poverty in their countries of origin. This was probably used as their basis to cast these aspersions at these immigrant teachers. Additionally, the idea of immigration has been at the forefront of the media lately Which may have exacerbated the situation.

**Navigating the Terrain.** Immigrant teachers need to be able to find strategies that will help them to effectively negotiate experiences in their new environment. They may look to colleagues who are either from their home country or American teachers. This is important as they start creating supportive networks as they navigate their beginning years as migrant teachers.

**Support.** All four participants discussed in detail their ‘sink or swim’ experience. This feeling might have been attributable to the lack of appropriate transition and support from the recruiting agency and the school district. This information is not new as Oriaro (2007) spoke about the lack of support for new immigrant teachers. The new teachers’ orientation program also did not create a professional development that would cater specifically to these immigrant teachers’ needs. Instead, the school district created an orientation for all teachers not realizing that immigrant teachers and native teachers while are new in the districts they all have different needs. Doerger (2003) argued that while each school may have its own unique culture, most teacher induction programs tend to employ a uniformed, ‘one-size-fits-all’ strategy that is unlikely to be effective for all schools. Steeves, (2011) states that professional development while important for all teachers, it is more so for immigrant teachers, who may need to relearn or adjust approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, techniques of classroom management and other aspects of the teaching profession in their new schools and communities.

The immigrant teachers did not to give high marks to the new teachers’ orientation at the Trident District Office., They stated it did not cater to their cultural needs. However, all four teachers reported that they all had very positive experiences



with their school principal. They thought she was very supportive and did not react to them differently because of their immigrant backgrounds. It seemed like these other immigrant teachers who came before paved the way for these four Jamaican immigrant teachers since their experiences painted a picture of a more understanding and caring principal.

All the immigrant teachers had a mentor teacher who was placed with them to guide them through the process. However, it seemed like the role of the mentor teacher was not clearly articulated to these teachers. Some mentor teachers did not seem to understand the immigrant teachers' prior experience and expectations in the United States. The mentor teacher's profile should include an understanding of the immigrant teachers' cultural background and the ability to explicitly explain the cultural differences between the immigrant teacher and Americans in the school environment.

**Acculturation through language.** Selected immigrant teachers described changes in their language usage with their students. They found themselves using new words from the students' home language. Some words they used in their Jamaican language contexts were inappropriate in their new environment. This form of acculturation was discussed and shows that the immigrant teacher is engaged in the process of assimilation. While some Jamaican immigrant teachers may utilize some American slang words they seemed very protective of their Jamaican accent and since they described it as being very unique. They ensure that they do not lose it and therefore when they meet with other Jamaicans they greet and talk in their dialect. Another immigrant teacher states that while she has used some things from the American culture she would not say that she has assimilated the culture, instead she holds on tightly to her

culture as she thinks it is unique and set her apart from others. This idea was explained in Berry's (1980) model of acculturation where he added the component of rejection to his model.

The ways in which the teachers react to students have also changed, this is due to the diversity found in the American context and the policies and rules that govern that teaching profession. In the Jamaica context there are different stories and anecdotes that teachers could tell but in the United States, these immigrant teachers had to be cognizant of the students religious, cultural, linguistics and sexual background.

**Change of kinship.** Changes in the family structure have marked a major transition for the immigrant teachers who forge new friendships with their immigrant counterparts and American teachers. Some friendships have created a special bond where it feels like family based on the caring and support given to the immigrant teacher. This type of support from other teachers can be described as fictive kinship. One teacher stated that she hardly made friends with natives and even though they provided support to her she prefers to forge friendships with other Jamaica immigrants. This is so as Miller, Birman, et al., (2009) state that ethnic groups may continue to stay together and preserve their native culture. Being with persons in the same culture also cause these immigrants to use languages that are comfortable for them.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Even though this case study research contributes to the body of literature on Jamaican immigrant teachers, there were only four immigrant teachers in this research. Therefore, their account given are not reflective of all first-year Jamaican immigrant teachers and therefore will not attempt to generalize the views and practices expressed by

participants in this study to other immigrant teachers because immigrant teachers are different depending on their cultural and linguistic background. However, by providing descriptions of the teachers' experiences these might be transferrable to cases of immigrant teachers from various backgrounds.

Methods used to obtain data for this study included interviewing, observing, and analyzing artifacts. Although the participants responses to interview questions and classroom observation sessions were honestly presented, three classroom observations were not enough to create a composite picture of their teaching over an entire school year.

The findings were based on a sample population that consisted of four female Jamaican immigrant teachers. Initially, to explore experiences across gender, I was interested including male Jamaican immigrant elementary teachers. However, none is working at Trident Elementary.

Immigrant teachers, who provided information in this research, were representatives of their workplaces and they did not represent all Jamaican immigrant teachers in southern South Carolina. If other immigrant teachers were interviewed or observed maybe they would have provided alternate information which could have led to different findings and a different conclusion.

To be considered a participant for this study the Jamaican immigrant elementary school teacher must be living in South Carolina for only one year. Therefore, the findings may not be totally applicable to other immigrant teachers who have lived in this state for longer than a year.

The research is also located in one elementary school in rural school district in South Carolina. The culture of the district and the parents cannot be generalized to the entire American population.

### **Implications of the Findings**

Several implications emerged from rigorous analysis of the findings. These will be dealt with in this section.

There is the need to customize orientation for immigrant teachers to at the district level. This orientation may include professional development in the areas of classroom management and intercultural communications. This professional support will immensely increase the immigrant teacher possibility of success and at the same time creating greater opportunities for acculturation. The support could also extend to the program level and would provide systematic pre-departure and arrival orientations; relocation support, including housing, financial assistance and transportation. Such programs will provide comprehensive support and will lead to a successful experience for the Jamaican immigrant teacher.

The immigrant Jamaican teachers seemed to be overwhelmed with meetings and professional development activities coupled with other effects of migrating to and teaching in an unfamiliar context. These plus their personal challenges can lead to them becoming anxious and unsure of how to deal with these changes. Therefore, these immigrant teachers could take the initiative to form groups with the main objectives to gain support. They can also seek moral support from colleagues which will help them understand the American and school culture.

The immigrant teachers explained that on the onset they experienced curriculum challenges that hindered them from writing lessons that had all the components of good lessons. The school system must be intentional in identifying a collegial process for sharing promising instructional practices between immigrant teachers and veteran teachers at the same grade level. There should, therefore, be release time for these immigrant teachers to observe and conference with exemplary native teachers or even immigrant teachers who migrated before them.

Many immigrant teachers struggle with classroom management so it was no surprise when all the teachers in the study stated that this was a challenging area for them. Despite my observation that showed only mildly disruptive classroom behavior, respondents were evidently affected by student behavior. The administration could be more responsive to the immigrant teachers' classroom management issues and take the necessary steps to help address these.

Keeping close contacts and working with parents are essential elements of teaching for all teachers. The immigrant Jamaican teachers expressed dissatisfaction with parental support at Trident Elementary School. Therefore, the immigrant teachers will need more guidance in working with these parents who are from a different cultural background from parents they are used to in their home country. Based on their prior experiences, these immigrant teachers were aware of the importance of communicating with parents. Therefore, steps need to be taken towards providing more guidance in working with parents in this new country.

When a school principal recognizes the important role an immigrant teacher plays it is not only a lot easier for the teacher to adjust but it also helps to remove some of the

anxiety the immigrant teacher maybe undergoing. The principal in this school seems to have evolved a multicultural outlook. The more multicultural experiences principals have, the more receptive they become towards a diverse population such as immigrant teachers. Therefore, it seems that principals and other administrators will need to seek out ways to broaden their multicultural experiences which will help them to be more receptive to teachers from diverse backgrounds.

### **Methodological Limitations**

There might have been some weaknesses in the interviewing process. Participants might have been unwilling or uncomfortable to share some information. For example, information regarded the Praxis exam even though was noted by me was not mentioned until the follow-up interview by any participants until it was explicitly mentioned.

I was unable to recruit any male immigrant teacher for the study and therefore the sample had to be all female, therefore, does not reflect the perspectives and insight of the male Jamaica immigrant teacher. Indeed, this does not only limit the findings to one ethnic group but also to a specific gender within that ethnic group. However, I believe that the findings on Jamaican immigrant teachers' pedagogies, their challenges and navigation strategies may represent patterns that might be verified in future studies with a larger more diverse group of Jamaican immigrant elementary teachers.

### **Implications for Research**

Although the sample size of the study was arguably small it, however, is important to examine the implications of the findings. These implications of findings should contribute to the discourses and discussions regarding the immigrant teachers,

strength, challenges, and changes as they immigrate and teach in Trident Elementary School in southern South Carolina.

The result from this research is consistent with some researchers who studied immigrant teachers such as Remennick (2002), Ross (2003) Manick (2005) Collin and Reid (2012)

It was my hope to arrive at a theory at the end of this dissertation namely “immigrant teacher pedagogy.” While some aspects manifested themselves in the Jamaican immigrant teacher classroom there were some components that were missing. The number of days I spent in the classroom doing formal observations could have been a factor. Also since this is a dissertation and has a time frame it would be better to further explore such theory in future research.

### **Implications of the Findings for Practice**

The research findings revealed that immigrant teacher’s pedagogical knowledge and skills did not only contribute to improved student academic success. It also helped students to be more aware and appreciative of countries and cultures beyond the United States. Therefore, these teachers need to be used in school as informal cultural or international ambassadors. These ambassadors would sensitize not only students in their classroom but other students and staff in the entire school community.

The immigrant teachers seem to have amassed valuable pedagogical skills. Therefore, avenues should be created so they can share their practice with other teachers and administrators (both immigrant and American).

Even though the teachers demonstrated and articulated exemplary practices obvious tensions exist between their teaching and their ability to easily achieve the

certification required to teach in the United States. When these teachers sat the Praxis all four teachers failed on the first attempt. On the second attempt, only one passed. There are therefore gaps between their existing knowledge and the knowledge required to pass this state-mandated test. These gaps need to be addressed.

Since the recruiting agent sends many immigrant teachers to this district, they need to find ways such as collecting a compendium of teachers' experiences to gear the exchange programs for improvement in practice. Collaboration with other school districts might be necessary to adequately create and implement such an initiative.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and implications of my study I make the following recommendations:

School districts should provide individualized support for the immigrant teachers. For example, orientation seminars should be based on immigrant teacher's needs, not a 'one size fits all' type. Also, create opportunities for these new Jamaican immigrant teachers arriving in South Carolina to attend an observation program in schools where they would be teaching or at a different school before they begin teaching. This would benefit them as some of these teachers have never observed teaching outside of their home country. Areas like conflict require training for this new instructional context.

The recruitment agencies should consider a community and school matching for these immigrant teachers. Teachers leaving from urban areas in their home countries and are relocated to deep rural areas in the United States can lead to anxiety and depression. Therefore, finding suitable communities for immigrant teachers to work in seems to be the humane route for these agencies.



Recruitment agencies and school districts should consider the introduction of relocation grants for immigrant teachers. This would help to offset prohibitive costs and help to alleviate some of their financial burdens that these teachers face especially in the early part of their arrival in the United States.

The agencies that hire these teachers also need to have a comprehensive induction program that will help reduce most of the teachers' challenges both personal and professional. Therefore, these induction programs would not only provide rules that the immigrant teachers should abide by but also help these teachers understand and function in this new environment.

The local based teachers and staff need sensitization of immigrant teacher and be prepared to face this diverse group. The district, therefore, needs to collaborate with universities such as the University of South Carolina that offers a plethora of diversity courses and work out the best delivery method. A range of different approaches and mechanisms such as raising awareness and establishing network could be used to promote diversity in this school district.

Apart from getting immigrants to showcase the culture help parents to understand that immigrant teachers are coming because of the shortage of teachers in the district and the state. Some parents do not understand the need for these teachers and may see them only as caregivers for their children.

Instead of having a single mentor teacher to work with the immigrant teacher, have one who is a native teacher who will help with sensitizing the teacher to classroom challenges and practices (such as lesson planning) and an immigrant teacher who will help with cultural, economic and the logistics of living in the United States. This local

and international mix would work to help alleviate some of the immigrant teachers' challenges.

Immigrant teachers also have a responsibility to ensure that they get the best possible experience in their new environment. Before leaving their country, they should do their own research on their new school community and joint network to prepare them to work and live in the United States. Immigrant teachers also need to weigh their goals for traveling whether it is for the cultural exchange or the financial gain. This preparation will determine their focus and they will then choose the appropriate place to go to meet those needs.

There should be a more standards-based method used to evaluate the teachers' credentials. Universities from feeder countries should be encouraged and supported to offer Praxis courses. In that case teachers could sit the examination before entering the United States so that the process of receiving certification would proceed more smoothly.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The data collected for this study were acquired from one elementary school in southeastern South Carolina with the participants being four first-year Jamaican immigrant teachers. While the study unearthed numerous findings that support and advance the existing literature, there are still areas in need of further research.

The time factor that was discussed earlier as limitations caused me to conduct only three classroom observations of each participant. To examine the immigrant teachers in their classroom setting future similar studies could conduct a series of observations using an observation protocol. This case study could be done with videotaping as a more

effective data collection method where the researcher(s) could revisit the video recordings and have more data to make conclusions.

The present study only explored the perspectives of the four Jamaican immigrant Elementary school teachers. To fully understand their experiences as well as the experiences of Americans affected by the presence of immigrant teachers, a follow-up future research may be conducted that involves the principal, school district officials, mentor and American teachers to provide multiple perspectives on the phenomena of teacher migration.

Another suggestion would be to explore gender in the specific strength, challenges, strategies and changes that the Jamaican immigrant teachers face. A study could be conducted using a sample of both gender or male immigrant teachers only to determine whether the strength, challenges, strategies and changes differ across gender.

## **Conclusion**

In this qualitative case study, I examined the experiences of four first-year Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers in southeastern South Carolina. This study aimed to contribute to the emerging literature on immigrant teachers. Through sharing the experiences of these different immigrant teachers served as teachers in a rural South Carolina school, new insights were gained on this select group of immigrants.

The student and teacher population in the United States continues to become more diverse. Therefore, it is important to have a commensurate inquiry on elements of this diversity within the classroom contexts. This study, by making sense of selected migrant teachers' experiences should add to the discourse on curriculum, diversity, and other social and pedagogical issues.

## REFERENCES

- Abrams, L. S., & Gibbs, J. T. (2002). Disrupting the logic of home-school relations: Parent involvement strategies and practices of inclusion and exclusion. *Urban Education*, 37(3), 384-407.
- Agunias, D. (2008) Managing Temporary Migration: Lessons from the Philippine Model. Migration Policy Institute Insight.
- Alexander, D., S. Heaviside and E. Farris. 1998. Status of education reform in public elementary and secondary school: Teachers' perspectives. *Education Statistics Quarterly* 1(1): 50-52.
- American Federation of Teachers. (2009). Importing educators: Causes and consequences of international teacher recruitment. Retrieved June 10, 2016 from <http://www.aft.org/pdfs/international/importingeducators0609.pdf>
- American Educational Research Association. (2000). Ethical standards of the American Educational Research Association. Retrieved May 1, 2016, from [http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/About\\_AERA/Ethical\\_Standards/EthicalStandards.pdf](http://www.aera.net/uploadedFiles/About_AERA/Ethical_Standards/EthicalStandards.pdf)
- Arun, E. (2008). Life history study of first-generation South Asian immigrant teachers experiences of joining and working in the Canadian teaching force (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2008)
- Balibar, E. (1991). Racism and nationalism. In E. Balibar and I. Wallerstein (Eds.), *Race, nation, class. Ambiguous identities*. London: Verso.
- Ball, A. F. and Tyson, C. A. (2011). *Studying Diversity in Teacher Education*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Banks, J. A. (1994). *Multiethnic education: Theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. A. (2003). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Banks, J. A. (2006). Democracy, diversity and social justice: Educating citizens for the public interest in a global age. In G. Ladson-Billings & W. F. Tate (Eds.),

- Education research in the public interest: Social justice, action and policy (pp. 141–157). New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Barnard-Naupe, J. (2011). Racism without races. [Blog post] retrieved from: <http://thoughtleader.co.za/jacobarnardnaude/2011/12/15/racism-without-races/>
- Bartlett & Hollifield (2008) Migration theory: talking across disciplines London; Routledge.
- Bascia, N. (1996). Teacher leadership: Contending with adversity. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 21, 3-13.
- Basit, T. N., & McNamara, O. (2004). Equal Opportunities or affirmative action? The induction of minority ethnic teachers. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 30(2), 97-115
- Basit T.N., Santoro N. (2011) Playing the role of 'cultural expert': Teachers of ethnic difference in Britain and Australia, *Oxford Review of Education*, 37(1), 37-52.
- Bean F. Vernez & Keely, C. (1989) Opening and closing the Doors: Evaluating Immigrant Reform and Control. Washington, D.C. Urban Institute Press.
- Berry, J.W. (1980) Acculturation as varieties of adaptation. In: Padilla, A., Ed., *Acculturation: Theory, Models and Findings*, Westview, Boulder, 9-25.
- Billingsley A. (1992) Climbing Jacob's ladder: The enduring legacies of African-American families. Simon and Schuster; New York.
- Borko, H., & Putnam, R. (1995). Expanding a teachers' knowledge base: A cognitive psychological perspective on professional development. In T. Guskey & M. Huberman (Eds.), *Professional development in education: New paradigms and practices* (pp. 35–66). New York: Teachers College Press
- Borman, G. D., & Dowling, N. M. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3), 367–409.
- Boyd, S. (2003). Foreign-born teachers in the multilingual classroom in Sweden: The role of attitudes to foreign accent. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 6(3–4), 283–295.
- Brettel, C.B., & Hollifield, J.F. (2008) Migration Theory: Talking across disciplines. New York: Routledge
- Burns, D. and Darling-Hammond, L. (2014). Teaching Around the World: What Can

- TALIS Tell Us? Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.
- Caravatti, M. L., Lederer, S. Mc., Lupico, A. and Van Meter, N. (2014). Getting Teacher Migration and Mobility Right. Brussels: Education International.
- Carrison, C. (2007). Learning from lived experiences: Strengths and insights of bilingual immigrant teachers. (Doctoral dissertation, Washington State University.
- Chapman, C. & King, R., (2012). *Differentiated assessment strategies: One tool doesn't fit all, second edition*. Thousand Oaks, California: Corwin Press
- Collins J., & Reid, C. (2012). Immigrant teachers in Australia. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Journal*, 4(2), 38-61
- Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, J. M. (1999). Shaping a professional identity: Stories of Educational Practice. New York, NY: Teacher College Press.
- Cook, D. A. (2010). Disrupted but not destroyed: Fictive kinship networks among Black educators in post Katrina New Orleans. *Southern Anthropologist*. 35(2), 1 - 25.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2002). Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice Hall
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among Five approaches (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). Educational research: Planning, conducting and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Cummins, J. (2010). Language support for pupils from families with migration backgrounds: Challenging Monolingual Instructional Assumptions. Retrieved, May 7,2016 from: <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). Reframing the school reform agenda: Developing capacity for school transformation. *Phi Delta Kappan*,74(10), 753-761.
- Delpit, L. (2006). Education in a multicultural society: Our future's greatest challenge. In *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* (pp. 167-183). New York: The New Press.

- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2003) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry*, 2nd. edition, California, Sage Publications.
- Deters, P. (2008). The professional acculturation of internationally educated teachers in Canada: Affordances, constraints and the reconstruction of professional identity. Paper presented at the Sociocultural Perspectives on Teacher Education and Development Conference, University of Oxford. Retrieved from: <http://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:974f6dac-9472-4ca6-ac99-8d10403ab3bd>
- Doerger, D. W. (2003). The importance of beginning teacher induction in your school. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, 7(21), 1-11.
- Donnelly, J. (1999). Cultural Relativism and Universal Human Rights. *Human Rights Quarterly* 6:400-419.
- Easton, K. L., McComish, J. F., & Greenberg, R. (2000). Avoid common pitfalls in qualitative data collection and transcription. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10, 703-708.
- Eggerth, D. E., DeLaney, S. C., Flynn, M. A., & Jacobson, C. J. (2011). Work experiences of Latina immigrants: A qualitative study. *Journal of Career Development*, 39(1), 13- 30.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2007). Studying Teachers 'Lives and Experience: Narrative Inquiry Into K-12 Teaching. In Clandinin, D.J. (Ed.) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*. Sage Publications, Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA, pp. 357 - 382.
- Elbaz-Luwisch, F. (2004) Immigrant teachers: stories of self and place: *Qualitative Studies in Education* 17-3
- Fordham, S. (1986). black students' school success: coping with the 'burden of "acting white. *urban review* 18:176–206.
- Freire, Paulo. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing Company.
- Freire, P. (2005). Teachers as cultural workers: Letters to those who dare teach (D. Macedo, D. Koike & A. Oliveira, Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Westview Press.
- Frye, M. (1983). *Politics of reality: Essays in feminist theory*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press.
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Teachers College Press. Gomm, R., Hammersley, M., & Foster, P. (2000).

- Case study and generalization. In R. Gomm, M. Hammersley, & P. Foster (Eds.), *Case study method* (pp. 98-115). London: Sage.
- Gibson, J. T. (1998). *Developing strategies and practices for culturally diverse classrooms*. Norwood: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.
- Gordon, J. (2006). Teachers from different shores. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 29(3), 28-36.
- Hague P. (1993) *Interviewing*. Kogan Page. London
- Hahaovitch, C. (2011). *No Man's Land: Jamaican Guest workers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor*. Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt7sc7r>
- Hall, J. K. (2002). *Teaching and researching language and culture*. London: Pearson Education.
- Hanushek, E. and Kimko, D. (2000) Schooling, labor-force quality and the growth of nations, *American Economic Review*, 90(5), 1184-1208.
- Hollifield, J. (2008). The Politics of International Migration: How Can 'Bring the State Back In? in Caroline B. Brettell and James F. Hollifield, eds. *Migration Theory: Talking Across Disciplines*. New York, Routledge.
- Hsieh, H.-F., & Shannon, S.E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288.
- Holland, D., & Lachicotte, W. (2007). Vygotsky, Mead and the new sociocultural studies of identity. In *The Cambridge companion to Vygotsky*, ed. H. Daniels, M. Cole and J. Wertsch, 101-135. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Hycner, R. H. (1999). Some guidelines for the phenomenological analysis of interview data. In Bryman A. & Burgess R.G. (Eds.), *Qualitative research* (Vol. 3, pp. 143-164). London: Sage.
- Iredale, R. (2001) The migration of professionals: theories and typologies *International Migration* 39(5): 7-26.
- Iruka, I. U., and Carver, P. R. (2006). Initial Results From the 2005 NHES Early Childhood Program Participation Survey (NCES 2006-075). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved April 1, 2017 from [http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/earlychild/tables/table\\_1.asp?referrer=report](http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2006/earlychild/tables/table_1.asp?referrer=report).
- Johnson, K. E., & Golombek, P. R. (Eds.). (2002). *Narrative inquiry as professional development*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press



- Johnson, C.L., & Barer, B.M. (1990). Families and networks among older inner-city blacks. *Gerontologist* 30:726–733.
- Joyce, B. and Showers, B. (2002). *Student achievement through staff development* (3rd ed.). Alexandria VA: Association for supervision and curriculum Development
- Kailasanathan, S. (2006). Road to Acculturation: Discourse Delineating the Imperatives, Strengths and Challenges of Immigrant Teachers. Paper presented at West CAST, 2006: Vancouver. Retrieved September 10, 2017 from <http://educ.ubc.ca/westcast/proceedings/Road%20to%20Acculturation%20Paper.pdf>
- Klomegah, R. (2006). Social factors relating to alienation experienced by international students in the United States. *College Student Journal*, 40, 303-315.
- Krippendorff K. (1980) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology*. Sage Publications, Newbury Park.
- Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, 97(1), 47-68.
- Ladson-Billings G. (2009). *The dream-keepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley.
- Ladson-Billings (2013) Lies my teacher still tell. Developing a Critical Race Perspective Toward the Social Studies. In Ladson-Billings(Ed) *Critical Race theory perspective on Social Studies. The profession politics and curriculum* (pp1-11) Charlotte, NC: Information Age publishing.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0 Aka the Remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1)74-84
- Lahey, P. N. (2003). Acculturation: a review of the literature. *Intercultural Communication Studies* XII (2), 103 -118.
- Lefever, S., Paavola, H., Berman, R., Guojonsdottir, H., Talib, M. T., & Gisladottir, K. R. (2014). Immigrant teachers in Iceland and Finland: Successes and contributions. *IJE4D Journal*, 4, 65-85.
- Lincoln, Y & Guba E. (1985), *Naturalistic inquiry*, Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Loop News (2016) Education Ministry reeling from loss of math and science teachers <http://www.loopjamaica.com/content/education-ministry-reeling-loss-math-and-science-teachers>
- Lynn, M., & Parker, L. (2006). Critical race studies in education: Examining a decade of research on U.S. schools. *Urban Review*, 38, 257-290.

- Manik S. (2009) Perspectives and Perplexities regarding transnational teacher migration between South Africa and the United Kingdom in J Fegan and M.H. Fields(Eds.) Education across borders Politics, policies and legislative actions(pp.147-161) Dordrecht: Springer
- Manik S. (2005) Trials, Tribulations and Triumphs of Transnational Teachers: Teacher Migration between South Africa and the United Kingdom. D.Ed. thesis, Unpublished. Durban: University of KwaZulu-Natal Edgewood College.
- Marden, C.F., & Meyer, G. 1968 Minorities in America (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co.
- Marvasti, A. (2005). U.S. academic institutions and perceived effectiveness of foreign-born faculty. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39(1), 151-176.
- Marx, S., & Larson, L. L. (2012). Taking off the color-blind glasses: Recognizing and supporting Latina/o students in a predominantly white school. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 48(2), 259-303.
- Mayring, P. (2000). Qualitative content analysis. Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 1(2). Retrieved April 25, 2017, from <http://217.160.35.246/fqs-texte/200/200mayring-e.pdf>
- Merriam, S. (2009). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. (1998). Qualitative research and case study application in education. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Meyers, H., & Smith, S. (1999). Coming home—Mentoring new teachers: A school-university partnership to support the development of teachers from diverse ethnic backgrounds. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 74(2), 75–89.
- Miller, A. M., Birman, D., Zenk, S., Wang, E., Sorokin, O., & Connor, J. (2009). Neighborhood immigrant concentration, acculturation and cultural alienation in former Soviet immigrant women. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 37, 88-105.
- Milner, H. R. (2003). Teacher reflection and race in cultural contexts: History, meanings, and methods in teaching. *Theory into practice*, 42(3), 171-179.  
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4203\\_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4203_2)
- Mishra, P (2006). Emigration and Brain Drain: Evidence from the Caribbean. IMF Working Paper, WP/06/25, Washington D.C.: International Monetary Fund, Western Hemisphere Dep

- Morrow, W. and Keevy, J. (2006). The recognition of teacher qualifications and professional registration status across Commonwealth Member States. Report prepared for the South African Qualifications Authority and Commonwealth Secretariat. Pretoria: SAQA.
- Myles, J., Cheng, L., & Wang, H. (2006). Teaching in elementary school: Perceptions of foreign- trained teacher candidates on their teaching practicum. *Teaching and Teacher education*, 22, 233-245.
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2012). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson
- O'Connor, S. (2001). Voices of parents and teachers in a poor white urban school. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 6 (3), 175-198
- Ochs, K. (2003). Teaching at risk – teacher mobility and loss in commonwealth member states. A study commissioned by the Commonwealth secretariat education section at the request of ministers of education of the commonwealth Caribbean. Research conducted by University of Oxford center for comparative and international studies.
- Oloo, J. A. (2012). Immigrant teachers in Saskatchewan: A human resource perspective. *KEDI Journal of Education Policy*, 9(2), 219-237.
- Oriaro, I. K. (2007). Initial classroom discipline issues encountered by Kenyan immigrant teachers in Southern California. (Doctoral dissertation, Biola University, 2007).
- Oswald, R. (2002). Resilience within the family networks of lesbians and gay men: Intentionality and redefinition. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 64(2): 374-84
- Parker, L., & Villalpando, O. (2007). A racialized perspective on education leadership: Critical race theory in educational administration. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 43(5), 519-524.
- Patton, M. Q. (2001). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods*. (3rd ed.). Saint Paul, MN: Sage Publications. Retrieved from <http://www.sagepub.com/books/Book9906>
- Patton, M. W. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pérez H, L., Benavides L, C., Malagón, M., Velez, V., & Solórzano, D. (2008). Getting beyond the “symptom,” acknowledging the “disease”: Theorizing racist nativism. *Contemporary Justice Review*, 11(1), 39-51.

- Pole, C. (1999) 'Black Teachers Giving Voice: Choosing and Experiencing Teaching', *Teacher Development*, 3 (3): 313-328.
- Pollock, M. (2008) From Shallow to Deep: Toward a Thorough Cultural Analysis of School Achievement Patterns. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 39 (4), 369-380
- Quiocho, A., & Rios, F. (2000). The power of their presence: Minority group teachers and schooling. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 485-528.
- Rebore, R.W. (2015). Human resources administration in education. 10th Edition. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.
- Remennick, L. (2002). Survival of the fittest: Russian immigrant teachers speak about their professional adjustment in Israel. *International Migration*, 40, 101-12.
- Richardson J.(ed.) (1996) Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Psychology & Social Science Leicester BPS Books.
- Ross, F. (2003). *Newcomers entering teaching: A program created for recent immigrants and refugees to become certified teachers*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Rudmin, F. W. (2003). Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration and marginalization. *Review of General Psychology*, 7(1), 3-37.
- Ryan, J., Pollock, K., & Antonelli, F. (2009). Teacher diversity in Canada: Leaky pipelines, bottlenecks and glass ceilings. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 32(3), 591 617.
- Santoro, N. (2007). 'Outsiders' and 'others': 'different' teachers teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. *Teachers and Teaching: theory and practice* 13(1), 81–97. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540600601106104> on July 16, 2017
- Schön, D. A. (1987). Educating the reflective practitioner. Toward a new design for teaching and learning in the professions. the Jossey-bass higher education series. Jossey-Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco.
- Schramm-Pate, S. (June 2014). Lecture, Knowing the Learner, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC. Retrieved 6/10/2014 from <https://blackboard.sc.edu>
- Schreier, M. (2012) Qualitative Content Analysis the Practice London: Sage
- Seah, W.T. (2003). Teachers in transition and the negotiation of value differences in the classroom: Perspectives of immigrant teachers of mathematics in Australia. Paper

- presented at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education and the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, November 29th – December 3, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Sharma, R. (2013) Teachers on the Move International Migration of School Teachers from India *Journal of Studies in International education* 17(3): 262-283
- Shujaa, M. (1995). Cultural self meets cultural other in the African American experience: Teachers' responses to a curriculum content reform. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 194-201.
- Silverman, J. (2000), *Doing qualitative research: a practical handbook*, London: Sage.
- Sives, A., Morgan, W.J., Appleton, S. (2004). Teachers as community leaders: the potential impact of teacher migration on education for all and millennium development goals. Paper for International conference on adult education and poverty reduction: a global priority, University of Botswana, 14–16 June 2004.
- Smith, (2000). *Education, Conflict and International Development*. London: Department for International Development (DFID).
- Solórzano, D., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 8, 23-44.
- Stabroek News (April 20,2002) CARICOM council to draft “managed migration” plan.
- Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Stuart, J. and Cole, M. with Birrell, G., Snow, D. and Wilson, V. (2003) *Minority Ethnic, and Overseas Student Teachers in South-East England: An exploratory study*, London: TTA.
- Su, Z. (1996). Why Teach: Profiles and Entry Perspectives of Minority Students as Becoming Teachers. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*. 29.
- Tatum, A. (2000). Breaking down the barriers that disenfranchise African American adolescent readers in low level tracks. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 44(1), 52-64.
- Thomas-Hope, E. (2004). *Migration situation analysis, policy and program needs for Jamaica*. The Planning Institute of Jamaica, Kingston: PIOJ and UNFPA.
- U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2009) *Schools and Staffing Survey, Public School Teacher Data File, 2008 – 09*.

- UNESCO (2005) Education for All global monitoring report: The quality imperative. Paris: UNESCO.
- Villegas, A., & Lucas, T. (2004). Diversifying the teacher workforce: A retrospective and prospective analysis. In M. Smylie & D. Miretzky, D. (Eds.), *Developing the teacher workforce* (Series: Yearbook of the National Study of Education; 103rd; pp. 70 -104). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Weston, K. (1991) Families We Choose. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Willis, J. (2007). Foundations of Qualitative Research: Interpretive and Critical Approaches. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Winter, R. (1987). Action-Research and the Nature of Social Inquiry: Professional Innovation and Educational Work. Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Company.
- Wolfe, F. (2007). Foreign teachers benefit U.S. schools, unions: districts look abroad for cultural exchange. Education Daily, 27 September Reprinted on the VIF International Education Web site. [Online] Available at: <http://www.vifprogram.com/about/newsarticle.pl?id=457> [Accessed September 8, 2016].
- Yelvington, K. A., & Bentley, G. C., (1991). Ethnicity as Practice? A comment on Bentley. comparative studies in society and history 33:158–168.
- Yin RK (2009). Case study research: design and methods. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, California, Sage Publications
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. Race Ethnicity and Education. 8(1). 69-91.

## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval Notice



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

DECLARATION of NOT RESEARCH

Claudia Fletcher  
College of Education  
Department of Instructions & Teacher Education / Curriculum & Instructions  
Wardlaw  
Columbia, SC 29208

Re: **Pro00067205**

This is to certify that research study entitled, ***“Pedagogy of the Transplanted: A Study of Selected Jamaican Immigrant Teachers and Their Perspectives on South Carolina’s Curriculum Processes,”*** was reviewed on **05/25/2017**, by the Office of Research Compliance, which is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). The Office of Research Compliance, on behalf of the Institutional Review Board, has determined that the referenced research study is not subject to the Protection of Human Subject Regulations in accordance with the Code of Federal Regulations 45 CFR 46 et. seq.

No further oversight by the USC IRB is required. However, the investigator should inform the Office of Research Compliance prior to making any substantive changes in the research methods, as this may alter the status of the project and require another review.

If you have questions, contact Arlene McWhorter at [arlenem@sc.edu](mailto:arlenem@sc.edu) or (803) 777-7095.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Johnson

IRB Assistant Director



## **APPENDIX B**

### **Request for Permission to Conduct Research in School**

Dear Madam,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research at your institution. Presently, I am a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina. The research I wish to conduct for my Doctoral thesis will involve 4 first-year Jamaica immigrant teachers. The focus of the research will be the perspectives and experiences of these migrant teachers on South Carolina's curriculum processes.

This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Rhonda Jeffries of the University of South Carolina.

I am seeking your consent to observe and interview these teachers in the school setting. If approval is granted, I will abide by all the policies and regulations of the school district. Additionally, I will conduct the research within the stipulations accompanying any letter of approval. Also, I am guided by the ethical guidelines for conducting research provided by the University of South Carolina.

I understand that participation in this research by these teachers are voluntary. I will preserve the anonymity of all participants in all reporting of this study. I will not reveal the identity or include identifiable characteristics of the schools or the school district.

I have provided you with a copy of my dissertation proposal which includes information of the instruments I will use to collect data. Additionally, there are consent forms I will provide to each participant.

Upon completion of this research, I will provide you as well as the participants a copy of the full research report. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at 8034452807 or email [fletcher\\_cl\\_7@hotmail.com](mailto:fletcher_cl_7@hotmail.com)

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your response concerning permission to conduct my research in your educational setting.

Yours sincerely,

Claudia Fletcher-Lambert

University of South Carolina.

## APPENDIX C

### Classroom Observation Document

Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ grade level \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/Time \_\_\_\_\_

| Criteria  | Descriptions and Comments |
|---|---------------------------|
| <b>Content Knowledge</b><br>shows good command and knowledge of subject matter, effectively addresses appropriate curriculum standards, integrates key content elements and facilitates students' use of higher level thinking skills in instruction.   |                           |
| <b>Organization</b><br>students are aware of procedures in the classroom, subject matter is organized; evidences preparation; is thorough; states clear objectives.   |                           |
| <b>Rapport</b><br>Lesson holds interest of students; teachers and students are respectful to each other and students are respectful to each other, teacher is fair and impartial; provides feedback, encourages participation; interacts with students, shows enthusiasm, assists students with academic problems.  |                           |
| <b>Teaching Strategies</b> uses relevant teaching methods, inclusion of culturally and linguistically, diverse students, cultural sensitivity aids, materials, techniques and technology; includes variety, balance, imagination, group involvement; uses examples that are simple, clear, precise and appropriate; stays focused on and meets stated objectives, reshaping the curriculum, student controlled classroom, small group instruction and academically related discourse. |                           |
| <b>Classroom management</b><br>uses time wisely; attends to interaction; demonstrates leadership ability; maintains discipline and control; maintains effective classroom management.   |                           |
| <b>Show Sensitivity</b><br>exhibits sensitivity to students' personal culture, gender differences and disabilities, responds appropriately in a non-threatening, pro-active learning environment  |                           |
| <b>Classroom Environment</b><br>Physical attributes of classroom, number of students in attendance, layout of room, students work on display teaching materials on display distractions if any; list any observations of how physical aspects affected content delivery   |                           |

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Interview Questions**

- Tell me a little about yourself?
- If you were to compare teaching in Jamaica and teaching in South Carolina
  - How would they be similar?
  - How would they be different?
- Describe an experience that stands out for you since you migrated to the United States
- Are you satisfied with the quality of support you have received from the agent, school, and district? If not, how might it be improved?
- Describe a typical day at Trident Elementary School for you?
- What are some of the major challenges you have experience in the United States classroom/school? (students, colleagues, parents and administrators)
- How do you deal with some of these challenges?
- What have you found most difficult about moving to the United States?
- Has the school facilitated you as you move to this new location? How
- Do you share your countries/ or other countries culture with your students? How do you do this?
- How do you deal with disciplinary issues, if they arise?
- Tell me about a positive experience you had at the school that affected other teachers, parents and school administrators.
- How are things different here in the U.S. in comparison to your home country?
- Please tell me about any important experiences you have had with any persons outside of school district- (parents, home visits, community involvement)
- Did you receive any Orientation to prepare you for your new life in the U.S.
- Please describe the services you provided to you when you got to the United States (from your program level and the school level).
- How do you show the students, parents and teachers that you are aware of the cultural differences that exist among yourself and them?
- What skills have you gained or develop since you came to the United States?
- What aspects of the American culture have you adapted that you think will be instrumental in the classroom?
- What aspect of the American culture have you adapted that will aid in your personal life?
- What have you done to further your knowledge or understanding about working in the United States? How have you applied your learning?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Letter of Invitation to Participants**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This letter is an invitation to you to become a participant in my research study titled “Pedagogy of the transplanted: A study of selected Jamaican immigrant elementary school teachers and their perspectives on South Carolina’s curriculum processes.” I am conducting this study in partial fulfilment of Doctoral degree in the Department of Education (Curriculum and Instruction) at the University of South Carolina under the supervision of Dr. Rhonda Jeffries. The purpose of the research is to examine the curriculum perspectives and experiences of immigrant teachers and how they respond in a new environment.

As a first-year immigrant teacher, you are in an ideal position to give me valuable firsthand information from your own perspective.

My data collection methods will be interviews, classroom observation and a review of your classroom artifacts. Each interview will last between 20 to 40 minutes. My objective is to elicit your perspectives and insights on being an immigrant teacher. Each interview will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded to facilitate collection of information and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish.

There will be about two to three classroom observations of 30-40 minutes. This time will be chosen and done at your convenience. Information from the observation will be written up and provided to you.

All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to research and findings could lead to greater public understanding

of immigrant teachers. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the IRB board at the University of South Carolina. However, the final decision to participate is yours.

I hope that the results of my study will be of benefit to those organizations directly involved in the study, other organizations not directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader research community.

Kindly complete the attached consent form and return it to me at your earliest convenience.

I look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in my research.

Yours Truly,

Claudia Fletcher-Lambert

## **APPENDIX F**

### **Consent Form**

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a research being conducted by Claudia Fletcher of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of South Carolina. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this research, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions and any additional details I may want.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be tape recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the dissertation and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I am aware that I will be observed in my classroom setting while interacting with students.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty, by advising the researcher.

This project had been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through, IRB (institutional review board) at the University of South Carolina. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in his study, I may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Review Board at The University of South Carolina.

With full knowledge of all research happening, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐

\_\_\_\_

YES

☐

\_\_\_\_

NO

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

☐

YES

☐

NO

I agree to a classroom observation, while I am engaged with my students

☐ YES      ☐ NO

I agree to have the researcher review classroom artifacts such as lesson plans, which will solely be used for research purposes

☐ YES      ☐ NO

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

☐ YES      ☐ NO

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_