An Investigation of Host Site Participants' Perceptions of a Shared Distance Learning Experience

Debra Lynn Williams-Carter

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AN INVESTIGATION OF HOST SITE PARTICIPANTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF A
SHARED DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

By
Debra Lynn Williams-Carter

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AN INVESTIGATION OF HOST SITE PARTICIPANTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF A
SHARED DISTANCE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

By

Debra Lynn Williams-Carter

Approved:

Esther Howard
Professor and Head
of Curriculum and Instruction
(Director of Dissertation)

Reuben Dilworth
Director, Center for Educational
Partnerships
(Committee Member)

William Person
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
Interim Director of Office of Graduate
Studies
(Committee Member)

Nancy Verhoek-Miller
Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
(Committee Member)

Linda T. Coats
Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction
(Committee Member)
(Graduate Coordinator)

Sue Minchew
Interim Dean, College of Education
The purpose of this study was to investigate host site participants’ perceptions of a shared distance learning experience. The participants for the study were 12 students enrolled in the course, Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education at Hunt University during the fall semester of 2000. The course was offered simultaneously to students at a distance site. Both groups of students received instruction from the same instructor during the course. According to the review of the literature numerous studies have been conducted to obtain data from the perspectives of distance site students. However, no literature was found that pertained specifically to the perceptions of host site participants. As a result, this study is unique and significant as it provides data from the perspectives of the host site participants.

A case study was the research design for this study. The researcher collected data through classroom observations, individual interviews and documents. Data were
triangulated from multiple data sources to answer each of the following five research questions:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?

2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?

3. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?

4. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?

5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at the host site?

Reflective analysis was utilized to draw conclusions about the data collected. Overall analysis revealed that participants were satisfied with their experience in the course. Recommendations to improve the course included the following:

1. Potential students should be told in advance that the course will be offered simultaneously to students at a distance site.

2. A facilitator should be provided at distance sites to communicate with the instructor about student participation.

3. Technology problems or difficulties should be anticipated and handled swiftly.

4. The instructor should provide ongoing feedback on course assignments throughout the semester.

5. The instructor should respond to electronic mail from students promptly.

6. The instructor should monitor the pacing of the course to avoid unnecessary delays.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my two children, Jasmine Jeanay Carter and Destiny Lynnae Carter. I thank God for blessing me with such precious gifts.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank God for the many blessings that he has bestowed upon me. God is with me in all of my endeavors and has never failed me.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Dr. Esther Howard. I am indebted to her for her knowledge, patience, positive comments, and beautiful personality, all of which enabled me to get to this point. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Linda Coats, Dr. Reuben Dilworth, Dr. William Person, and Dr. Nancy Verhoek-Miller for agreeing to serve on my committee and share their knowledge and time to assist me with completing this dissertation. Without the assistance of such dedicated educators, I realize that this project would not be what it has become. A heartfelt thanks is also extended to Dr. Janet Reid who has been there from the very beginning helping and encouraging me to complete this task.

My gratitude is also extended to my family. I would like to thank my family for their support and encouragement. A special thank you to my daughter, Jasmine, for our many trips and countless hours spent at the library. I would like to additionally thank my husband, William Carter; my father, Reverend John Williams; my mother, Betty Williams; sister, Brenda Williams-Bankhead; brother, John Williams Jr., and best friend, Joycelyn Cook for being my personal cheerleaders, encouraging me to achieve my goals.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.   INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Description</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.  REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Education and Traditional Education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Distance Education</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of Distance Education</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Perceptions of Distance Education</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purposes of Case Study Research</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages of Case Study Research</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages of Case Study Research</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Validity and Reliability</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasmine</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristy</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jody</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stacy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumentation</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Researcher</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documents</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Course Survey</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Course Evaluation</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Evaluation of Faculty</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Learning Technology Survey</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the Surveys</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Interviews</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Course Evaluation</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Evaluation of Faculty</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance Learning Technology Evaluation</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Course Evaluation</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for Course Enrollment</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Instruction</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility of the Instructor</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Communication</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Improvement</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions about Participants’ Motivation for Course Enrollment...</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions about the Quality of Instruction</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions about the Accessibility of the Instructor</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions about the Quality of Communication</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions about the Participants’ Suggestions for Improvement ....</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Further Study</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Additional Research</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for the Pilot Program</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDIX</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Institutional Review Board Approval</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Consent Form</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Syllabus</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Instruments</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E VITA</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, colleges and universities serviced a population of students primarily 18 to 25 years of age. These students’ primary objective was to obtain a four year degree, but they also attended college for reasons such as social, artistic, athletic, and spiritual growth (Dunn, 2000).

While postsecondary institutions continue to serve traditional students, advances in technology have made it possible for more nontraditional students to be served. Charp (2000) explained that today’s distance learners are those who do not have access to traditional programs. Distance learners include employees who work during traditional scheduled class hours, individuals unable to travel to the nearest university, and/or self-motivated individuals who want to take courses for self-knowledge or advancement.

The technology revolution has made it possible for college students to obtain higher education regardless of their circumstances. Since the induction of numerous varied technologies, students may obtain higher education in the privacy of their own home. People who live in rural areas now have access to higher education through institutions that offer distance education courses and programs. Employees who need to obtain advanced education to fulfill job requirements are now able to do so through distance education without having to quit their jobs or relocate.
Verduin and Clark (1991) defined distance education as any formal approach to learning in which a majority of the instruction occurs while educator and learner are in separate locations at a distance from one another. Phipps, Wellman, and Merisotis (1998) defined distance education as instruction delivered over a distance to one or more individuals located in one or more venues. Both definitions are similar in stating that instructor and learner are separated from each other for the delivery of instruction.

Distance education encompasses the various methods and approaches that make it possible for college students to earn degrees without being enrolled in the traditional manner. According to Sherron and Boettcher (1997), the first recorded form of distance education was the use of correspondence courses. Correspondence courses required assignments and materials to be sent to the students through the postal service. The students completed the assignments and mailed them back to the university, at which time a grade for the course was given.

Today, distance education has evolved tremendously due to technological advances. Various mediums, in addition to the use of print materials utilized in correspondence courses, now provide opportunities for nontraditional, as well as traditional students to earn degrees in higher education without traveling to the campus of a university or college.

**Background of the Study**

This case study describes the experiences of 12 participants enrolled in a course at Hunt University (host site). This course was being offered simultaneously to
11 participants at a distance site via satellite. The students at the host site were in the classroom where the technology was being utilized to offer the course to students at the distance site. Both groups of students were participating in a pilot project. The project was developed by the university to offer both groups of participants the opportunity to obtain a Master of Science degree in elementary education. During the fall semester of 2000, these two groups were enrolled in two courses.

Dr. Lynn, the instructor for the course, had no prior experience teaching a distance education course. As a result, she participated in a one day training session on interactive television. The preparatory session was held on the campus at the university.

The director of the distance education program at the university explained that this pilot program allowing students at a distance to obtain Master of Science degrees via satellite developed as a result of a community college (distance site) seeking to offer advanced degrees to students previously enrolled in their undergraduate program which was also taught via satellite. Noting that the nearest university was approximately 60 miles from the community college, the president at the community college developed a task force to determine if individuals would be interested in completing a graduate program of study via satellite to obtain Master of Science degrees. In March 2000, the task force began contacting local educators and other community members to determine if they would be interested in participating. The program was advertised through articles in local newspapers and brochures sent to neighboring school districts to solicit adequate participation and support.
After determining a need for the program, the president of the community college contacted two universities to request proposals for developing and offering the program. While the other university declined the offer, Hunt University submitted a proposal that was accepted. As a result, the first required course of the 30 hour program of study, Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education, was to be offered at Hunt University in August 2000. As proposed, the course was broadcasted via satellite to the community college site.

In August 2000, 12 students enrolled at the host site and 23 were enrolled at the community college, the distance site. Participants at the distance site and those at the host site were both enrolled in the course, Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education, as part of their programs of study.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of students at a university in Mississippi enrolled in a course being offered simultaneously to students at a distance site as part of a pilot distance education program. The Department of Education was seeking to evaluate the pilot distance education program to ensure quality and program effectiveness. Therefore, the results from this study will provide information to assist with the evaluation of the pilot distance education program.

Petracchi and Patchner (2000) stated that research has been conducted to evaluate distance education; however, limited research exists on host site students’ perceptions about their learning experiences. Research concerning students’ perceptions must be analyzed as educators prepare programs of study which
incorporate usage of emerging technologies in instructional delivery. Therefore, this study will contribute to the body of literature about distance education concerning the effectiveness of teaching both host and distance site students simultaneously.

**Site Description**

The study took place in a classroom at Hunt University, the host site. The classroom is equipped with four televisions, two cameras, a computer, monitor and scanner. Two televisions and a camera are located at the front of the classroom, as well as in the rear. The computer, monitor, and scanner are positioned on a large rectangular desk at the front of the classroom. An aisle is centered between two rows of four rectangular tables positioned on each side of the classroom. Four seats are available at each table. Microphones are also stationed on the tables. At the rear of the classroom are two doors for entering and exiting the room.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?
2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?
3. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?
4. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?
5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at
the host site?

**Significance of the Study**

According to a review of the current literature within the past five years on distance education, a limited amount of research exists on the perspective of host site participants. While literature does exist on distance education in general, most studies compare distance education to traditional education and/or examine the perceptions of students at the distance site. Clow (1999) and Ponzurick, France, and Logar (2000) collected data which compared the performance of students in traditional and distance education courses. DeBourgh (1999), Inman and Kerwin (1999), Petracchi (2000) and Beard and Harper (2002) examined the perceptions of students concerning their distance education experiences. While efforts are being made by these researchers to substantiate that distance learning is a viable means of offering higher education courses, the perceptions of host site participants in these distance education studies have not been investigated.

The results of this study will make a contribution to the existing body of literature on distance education. The study will pertain specifically to a traditional course in the field of education being offered to graduate students at a university while being taught simultaneously to students at a distance site. The results of the study will provide information on the perceptions of students at the host site concerning their experience.
**Limitations**

Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) suggest that generalizability is an important and achievable goal of quantitative research; however, they state that generalizing findings from case studies is problematic. This particular study is a case study, which is a form of qualitative research. It is limited to the investigation of the perceptions of 12 host site students about a traditional course being offered simultaneously to distance site students for the first time at Hunt University by the Department of Education. Considering that the study is qualitative in nature, some researchers would state a lack of generalizability as a limitation for this study. Hutchinson (1988) expressed that case study research should be used to develop grounded theory that can be used as the basis for quantitative studies which are more suitable for determining the generalizability of research findings. Other researchers would not consider this to be a limitation. Wilson (1979) suggested that generalizing findings of case study research lies with the “consumers” rather than the researcher.

**Definition of Terms**

**Asynchronous Delivery**: The process of delivering instruction to students at a distance site through the use of recorded instructional materials (Parrot, 1995).

**Case Study**: “The in-depth study of instances of a phenomenon in its natural context and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon.” (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003).
Delivery System: The method by which instruction is delivered to participants involved in distance learning (Stenhoff, Menlove, Pryan, & Alexander, 2001).

Distance Learning: Any educational instruction that occurs when students are located some geographic distance from the instructor’s teaching site (Petracchi, 2000).

Distance Site: The location where students at a distance are receiving instruction (Anderson & Kent, 2001).

Distance Site Students: The students enrolled in the course at a different location from the instructor (Petracchi, 2000).

Faculty Assistant: One that assists a teacher at a college, university, or school (Costello, 1994).

Host Site: The location (university) from which instruction is delivered to students at a distance (Anderson & Kent, 2001).

Host-Site Students: The students enrolled in the course at the host site (Petracchi, 2000).

Instructor: A college teacher ranking below an assistant professor (Costello, 1994).

Interactive Television: “An educational environment utilizing systems of technology, which provide for two-way dialogue, such as telephone, computers, two-way radios, or a combination of these” (Reid, 2003, p. 10).
**Quality Instruction**: Instruction that meets the educational needs of the students (Birnbaum, 2001).

**Synchronous Delivery**: “The delivery of instruction to groups of students at the same time and place” (Picciano, 2001, p. 70).

**Technician**: An expert in a technical field or process (Costello, 1994).

**Traditional Campus Method**: An approach to providing instruction to students without distance learning technologies (Dominguez & Ridley, 2001).

**Traditional Instruction**: Instruction being provided to students in a classroom at a university without distance learning technologies (Motamedi, 2001).

**Traditional Students**: The students taking a course in a classroom setting without distance learning technologies (Stenhoff, Menlove, Pryan, & Alexander, 2001).
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of host site participants concerning a shared distance learning experience. This chapter summarizes pertinent literature relevant to this investigation. The chapter begins by presenting findings of studies comparing traditional to distance education. Also included is information concerning the development of distance education, advantages and disadvantages of distance education and research on the effectiveness of distance education courses. The final section reviews information concerning students’ perceptions of the effectiveness of distance education courses.

Distance Education and Traditional Education

The traditional format for presenting college courses has been examined for years and deemed effective for offering students a higher education. Instructional media such as print, audiocassettes, videocassettes, and television have been proven to be effective in traditional classroom settings. With these practices being evaluated as effective, distance education is also deemed effective if it offers an education comparable in quality to that of a traditional course. The research consistently compares the experiences of students receiving instruction at a distance site with the experiences of students at the host site. Other literature compares the
instruction offered to students at a distance site to the instruction received by students in traditional classroom settings. The literature reviewed is from the perspective of the distance students. Literature pertaining to the perceptions of the host site participants’ experiences is limited.

Several researchers have found interactive distance learning to be an effective means of delivering instruction to students. Clow (1999) collected data from student course evaluations on graduate and undergraduate students to compare the impact of interactive distance learning on these students. The students that participated in the study were either in a traditional classroom setting, at the host site or distance site. He found that interactive distance learning is a very effective means of delivering instruction to graduate students. However, the opposite was true for undergraduates in this study. Clow found that undergraduates were dissatisfied with the instructor and his or her use of the technology.

Additionally, Petracchi and Patchner (2000) reported findings from surveys of students who were enrolled in a class utilizing interactive television at: (a) the host site, (b) the distance site, or (c) the university in a traditional setting. They utilized a questionnaire to obtain data concerning the instructor’s interactive skills, students’ perceptions of resource availability and student evaluations of classroom learning experiences with technological aspects. They found no statistically significant differences in the students’ assessments of their instructor’s interactions, instructor’s accessibility and resource availability. Concerning the technological aspects of the learning environments, all students were satisfied.
Petracchi and Patchner (2001) collected data from two groups of graduate students, one group receiving instruction with the instructor present at the host site and the other receiving instruction by interactive television at a distance site. They found that students at both locations performed equally well.

Ponzurick, France, and Logar (2000) developed and administered a field survey to analyze graduate students’ perceptions of methods utilized to offer a marketing management distance course. The students that they obtained data from consisted of traditional part time and distance part time students. While they found that students in the traditional course were more satisfied than their distance education counterparts concerning course content and course format, students in the distance education course were also willing to take another course using the distance technology.

Finally, Gagne and Shepherd (2001) reported their research findings concerning graduate level accounting distance students. They compared the performance of students in a distance education course and a traditional course. They found the performance of both groups of students to be similar in all areas and concluded that delivery of distance education is as effective as the traditional methods when comparing learning outcomes of students in these courses.

**Development of Distance Education**

Distance education is not a new phenomenon. According to Sherron and Boettcher (1997) it has existed for generations, but originally began with the offering of correspondence courses. Traditional mediums used for delivering distance
education permitted only one-way communication at a time. However, technological advancements have presented the opportunity for distance education to expand. Correspondence education, which once only utilized the medium of print, now uses electronic mail, allowing instructors and students to communicate within minutes, as opposed to days, weeks, or even months with prior systems of delivery. Technological advancements now provide for two-way communication, making it possible for instructor and students to see and communicate with each other although they are physically in different locations.

Distance education has advanced tremendously. According to Prewitt (1998) the Universities of Pennsylvania and Chicago are credited for beginning the use of correspondence courses (Prewitt, 1998). Wisconsin’s School of Air was the first American distance education program to use broadcast television in the 1920s. Educational television began in the 1970s allowing distance education to be offered to many learners in rural and isolated areas. Since the 1970s, many other systems have been utilized. Within the past decade, computer networking has provided many new ways of reaching distant learners including audio, graphic, video, and text-based communication which allows for more human interaction than mediums of the past.

Sherron and Boettcher (1997) provide a more detailed timeline on the development of distance education utilizing four periods of development. According to Sherron and Boettcher, the first period of distance education began with the utilization of print in 1850, followed by radio in 1930 and the use of television in the 1950s. All of these systems of delivery were similar due to the fact that they used
primarily one form of technology which provided only one-way communication. During this time period, students and faculty interacted through telephone and mail. Occasionally, facilitators and/or student mentors were utilized to assist with the process of delivering instruction through distance education.

As explained by Sherron and Boettcher (1997) the second phase of distance education began in 1960 and continued to 1985. This generation of distance education provided additional forms of technology to the already present mediums of print, television, and radio. The new mediums included audiocassettes, videocassettes and fax machines. Although one-way communication was still the dominant means of communication, interaction between faculty and students could be facilitated by fax in addition to telephone conversations and mail. Similar to the previous generations, face-to-face meetings were sometimes used to facilitate instruction.

The third phase, which existed from 1985 until 1995, began utilizing computers and computer networking to deliver distance education. During this time period, two-way communication as a means of offering distance education became available. The various delivery systems by which distance education was offered expanded to include electronic mail, chat sessions, bulletin boards, computer programs, as well as audio and video conferencing (Sherron & Boettcher, 1997).

The fourth phase began in 1985 and continues into the first decade of the 21st century. In this period, additional technologies are available, as well as those utilized in the previous time periods. Common features of this phase include the use of asynchronous delivery, but also synchronous delivery of instruction. Asynchronous
delivery refers to the use of recorded instructional materials to offer distance education (Parrot, 1995). Synchronous delivery is the delivery of instruction at the same time and place (Picciano, 2001). Additional methods of delivery in this phase include digital video programming, two-way interactive real time audio and video capabilities, in addition to digital video transmission available through the Internet and World Wide Web.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Distance Education

Research reveals both advantages and disadvantages of distance education. Knowledge of the advantages and disadvantages concerning distance education yields vital information for evaluating distance education. Specifically, knowledge of advantages will allow institutions to determine the benefits of offering courses in this manner while helping them to determine which practices should be kept in place and/or built upon to promote and duplicate effective practices in distance learning situations. Prior knowledge of disadvantages will help institutions avoid offering poor quality programs.

Providing courses through distance education can offer advantages for institutions and students. Distance education increases student access to higher education as institutions take classes to students and provide individuals and groups of individuals with opportunities for development, education and instruction that might not otherwise be available (Collins & Deweesee, 2001; Thoms, 1996). It allows institutions to offer a broader selection of courses to meet the needs of students, as well as continuing education courses, workshops, and seminars. By
providing a variety of courses, institutions are able to increase class sizes in appropriate courses and student retention. Distance education offers convenient, continuous and quality education programs for many students, which enhances and expands students’ learning opportunities. Students are able to broaden their knowledge of culturally diverse populations through exposure to students at remote sites. Additionally, they are able to make better use of their time, travel and finances (Thoms, 1996).

Gagne and Shepherd (2001) also found distance education to be advantageous for students and institutions. Students stated that distance education is advantageous because it provides increased access to courses, flexible schedules and less travel. Institutions find distance education advantageous due to increased enrollment of students without the demand for constructing and maintaining additional buildings.

While research reveals that distance education is advantageous for institutions and students, research reveals that disadvantages do exist. Institutions face difficulties with the organization of courses, management of courses and educational changes. The necessary technology is not always available. Poor quality distance education programs exist due to inadequate supervision of students and a lack of sufficient interaction between students and faculty members. As a result, retaining faculty, staff and students in distance education programs is a real problem in some situations (Collins & Deweese, 2001). Gagne and Shepherd (2001) also noted disadvantages to offering distance education courses. Higher tuition and fees are usually required for distance education courses. Additionally, it is difficult for some institutions to provide
adequate accommodations and support for faculty teaching these courses.

**Effectiveness of Distance Education**

Charp (2000) found that certain characteristics are desirable to ensure effective distance education programs. Programs are more effective when performance and competency-based objectives are clearly defined and understood by the instructor and learners. Manageable class sizes with approximately 15 to 30 students also promote effectiveness. Students are more successful in distance education courses when they have the necessary background, knowledge and technical skills needed to engage in and complete the requirements. Instructors should be available and accessible to help students successfully participate in the program.

Traditional methods utilized to assess the effectiveness of distance education are student evaluations, surveys, grades and attrition rates. Student evaluations are good indicators of course quality when they contain specific questions pertaining to distance education. Additionally, surveys are useful for determining the effectiveness of courses when administered on a regular basis to determine weaknesses. Analysis of grades can be used to assess effectiveness of courses when analyzed in conjunction with the performance of assigned tasks by students. Analyzing the attrition rate of students is another good determiner of the quality and effectiveness of courses when analyzed collectively with a survey evaluating instruction and analysis of grades (Wade, 1999).

While Wade (1999) posed traditional methods to assess the effectiveness of distance education, Dominguez and Ridley (2001) explored an alternative framework
for assessing distance education courses. Dominguez and Ridley placed emphasis on exploring course-based data rather than student-level data. To determine whether the distance education courses had prepared students as well as the traditional prerequisite courses, they analyzed students’ grades and determined student success to be obtaining a grade of C or higher. They found that distance education courses prepared students as well as traditional courses.

Dominguez and Ridley (2001) and Harnar, Brown, and Mayall (2000) studied the effectiveness of distance education. They assessed students’ knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors to determine variables related to successful distance education experiences and predict students’ participation in future distance education courses. They found that the instructor and instructional activities are important factors vital for a successful distance education experience. Dominguez and Ridley found that distance education experiences are enhanced when a professor or instructor is comfortable with technology, when high quality technical delivery is delivered and appropriate class activities and assignments are utilized.

Carter (2001) surveyed the attitudes of students enrolled in a distance education course about course design, course interaction, course presentation, equipment and technology usage. Overall evaluation of the course revealed distance education to be effective when appropriate instructional materials are used, students have equal access to materials and equipment and prior plans are made to handle technical problems that arise.
**Student Perceptions of Distance Education**

Student perceptions provide information vital for evaluating the effectiveness of courses offered. Pertinent literature reveals that students perceive distance education to be a viable approach for obtaining higher education. While distance education courses were deemed effective by a large percentage of students in most courses, research suggests that students may be rating courses as effective due to convenience factors rather than quality consideration. Specific areas of concern include teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction, as well as instructors’ experience with distance education.

DeBourgh (1999) found that the instructor’s use of quality instructional practices is important to distance students’ perceived satisfaction with distance education. Surveying 44 nurses enrolled in a graduate course, DeBourgh found that students perceived distance education to be effective when specific practices were utilized. The instructor must set clear expectations about course assignments. Students’ questions must be addressed and responded to promptly. Student’s questions must be encouraged to actively participate in class sessions. A variety of instructional techniques should be used to help students thoroughly understand material covered in the course. Mechanisms must be established to ensure that students have access to the instructor outside of class sessions. It is imperative also that the instructor provides timely feedback and return of students written course assignments.
In comparison to traditional courses, students often deem distance education courses as effective when certain conditions are met. Inman and Kerwin (1999), as well as Beard and Harper (2002) surveyed distance students’ perceptions of distance learning classes. Technology usage and interaction between the instructor and students were the major considerations regarding the quality of courses. Inman and Kerwin found that students perceived courses to be effective when the instructor was able to demonstrate appropriate and knowledgeable use of technology. Additionally, they perceived courses to be effective when the instructor was accessible to the students inside and outside of class. Beard and Harper found that students perceived the course to be less effective when there was insufficient instructor-student interaction. Additionally, students perceived the course to be less effective when there was difficulty with technology usage.

Petracchi (2000) also analyzed responses from distance students enrolled in a distance education course concerning their experiences with technology, the learning environment, the instructor’s teaching ability and the perceived availability of resources. Petracchi found that all students perceived the course to be an effective learning experience. Students were pleased with their learning experience and the majority noted that they would be willing to take another course in the same format. Students did not perceive there to be a problem with the technology, but did express concern over microphone usage and sound transmission.
Stenhoff, Menlove, Pryan and Alexander (2001) evaluated students’ perceptions of instructor-student and student-technology interactions in a distance education course. They found that the experience of the instructor impacts students’ perceived effectiveness of distance education courses. Students perceived instructors with more technology experience to be more effective in teaching these courses than those with less experience. Additionally, they perceived teacher and student interaction to be better with more experienced instructors.

**Summary**

Distance education originated with correspondence courses Prewitt (1998) but has evolved tremendously throughout the years. According to literature by Sherron and Boettcher (1997) distance education can be divided into four specific time periods spanning from the 1850s to the present time. Distance education was originally offered through one-way communication methods, but technological advancements have enabled it to be offered today through two-way communication methods.

Distance education is advantageous for students and institutions. Some noted advantages of distance education for students include increased accessibility to courses, better selection of courses, expansion of knowledge and better use of time, travel and finances. Distance education allows institutions to offer continuing education courses, workshops, and seminars; increase class sizes in appropriate courses, retain students by providing a variety of offerings, reduce costs by sharing speakers; accommodate the various learning styles of students and provide continuous
While distance education has many advantages, some disadvantages have also been noted. Institutions face difficulties with short and long term organization, management, and educational changes. Access is limited for some populations. Problems with distance education programs exist due to inadequate supervision of students and a lack of sufficient interaction between students and faculty members. Retaining faculty, staff, and students is difficult in some situations.

Distance education is perceived to be as effective as traditional courses when certain conditions are present. Instructors must be knowledgeable and use quality instructional practices. They must be accessible to students inside and outside of class. Students must actively participate in class. Interaction between the instructor and students as well as between students must occur during the experience. Arrangements to handle technology problems must be made in advance. Problems with technology that arise must be handled promptly.

Distance education is a viable means of offering courses to students. Research reveals that technological advancements allow distance education courses to be as effective as traditional courses. When certain conditions are met, distance education is advantageous for institutions and students. Distance education allows institutions to reach students that might not otherwise have access to courses being offered by the institution.

In conclusion, this review of the related literature has provided information regarding distance education. The studies reviewed focus primarily on distance
students at the distance sites. This review of literature did not reveal any studies that focused primarily on the perspectives of students at host sites. Therefore, this study will add to the body of literature concerning distance education, as well as provide research on the perspectives of host site students concerning a distance education experience.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of students at a university in Mississippi enrolled in a course being offered simultaneously to students at a distance as part of a pilot distance education program. This chapter describes the methods used to conduct this case study. The theoretical framework, based on the phenomenological perspective provides the theoretical underpinnings for this research. Twelve graduate students enrolled in the course at Hunt University (pseudonym) were the participants. Five instruments were used to obtain data for the study: the researcher, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation, Beginning of Course Evaluation, End of Course Evaluation and Student Evaluation of Faculty. Data were collected through interviews, observations and documents and was analyzed through reflective analysis.

Research Design

The research design for this study is a case study. According to Stake (1995) “Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p.xi). Additionally, Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) defined a case study as, “The in-depth study of instances of a
phenomenon in its natural context, and from the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 619). This case study was an investigation of the perceptions of students enrolled in a course at a host site being offered simultaneously to graduate students at a distance site.

**Theoretical Framework**

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) discussed phenomenology as an approach to qualitative research. Although there are several approaches to qualitative research which include structural-functionalism, exchange theory, conflict theory, systems theory and behaviorism, most qualitative researchers utilize some phenomenological perspective. Phenomenology emphasizes the interpretive understanding of human interaction and trying to understand the meaning of events and interactions to people in situations. Although phenomenology differs from other approaches, all share to some degree the goal of understanding the subjects from participants perspectives” (p. 24). Since research has consistently indicated the importance of evaluating the perceptions of students to determine the effectiveness of courses, this case study investigated the perceptions of these students in an attempt to understand the occurrences in this course and determine course effectiveness.

Green’s study (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), stated that phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality” (p. 23). This case study is aligned with Green’s perspective of phenomenology. The researcher will interact with participants in the
classroom by making classroom observations, participating in class discussions, as well as conducted individual interviews. The collection of data through multiple sources allowed the researcher to as accurately as possible reveal the perceptions of the participants about the course.

**Purposes of Case Study Research**

Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) stated that researchers do case studies for three purposes:

1. Researchers do case studies to provide a detailed description of phenomenon.
2. Researchers do case studies to develop explanations of a phenomenon.
3. Researchers do case studies to evaluate a phenomenon.

Reflecting on Gall et al., this case study is being done for the third purpose, evaluating a phenomenon. Hunt University is offering this formerly traditional course to students at a distance site for the first time using interactive distance technology. Therefore, the students’ perceptions of their experience must be identified in order to evaluate the effectiveness of this course. In an effort to offer the course in the most effective manner possible for current and future students, Dr. Lynn, Department Head of the Department of Education at Hunt University and a committee of researchers decided that data should be collected from participants at both sites. The research for this study was done to obtain the perceptions of host site participants’ related to their experiences while being enrolled in this course. Additionally, participants were able to share suggestions for improvement of the
course. The results will assist the Department of Education at Hunt University with their efforts to offer this course in the most effective manner possible.

Advantages of Case Study Research

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) two apparent advantages of case study research exist. The first advantage is the ability to bring a case to life using thick detailed descriptions in a way not possible utilizing quantitative methods. Gall et al. stated that thick description is “…a richly detailed report that recreates a situation and as much of its context as possible, along with the meanings and intentions inherent in that situation. The second advantage of case study research is the emergent quality. Emergent quality allows researchers to adopt new data collection methods and formulate new research questions, as they collect data, and gain more insight into the phenomenon under investigation. In this case study, the researcher used emergent quality to determine occurring themes to reveal the perceptions of the participants.

Disadvantages of Case Study Research

According to Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) three apparent disadvantages exist concerning case study research. The first disadvantage is a lack of generalizability to other situations. Generalizability refers to the extent to which the findings of a research study can be applied to other individuals or situations. A second disadvantage is that ethical problems arise if the researcher is unable to disguise the identity of the organization or individuals being investigated. A third disadvantage of case studies is that they are labor intensive and require a qualified researcher with the
necessary skills to identify constructs, themes, and patterns in order to write a report that brings the case to life for the reader.

Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) provided three strategies that the researcher can use to help readers generalize findings of case study research: utilizing thick description to present the findings, addressing whether the case is representative of the general phenomenon under investigation and conducting cross case analysis if a multiple case design is used. For this research, the researcher used thick description to assist readers with generalizing the findings to other phenomena of interest related to this study.

Since it is sometimes difficult for case study researchers to disguise the identity of institutions and participants when reporting research, the researcher for this study utilized pseudonyms to disguise the identity of the university and participants to ensure that the code of ethics is not broken. The need for a qualified researcher did not present a problem for this study. The researcher for this study is currently a doctoral student and public school teacher with ten years of experience. Additionally, the researcher has prior experience in doing case study research. These qualifications enabled the researcher to prepare a quality report worthy of use by others with an interest in this phenomenon.

**Validity and Reliability**

Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) explained that reliability and validity are important concerns with qualitative research. In qualitative research, the concerns about reliability and validity are focused on the design of the study. Goodwin and
Goodwin defined reliability as the extent to which independent researchers discover the same phenomenon, describe the findings in a similar manner and agree with participants about their meanings. Goetz and LeCompte’s study (as cited by Goodwin & Goodwin, 1996) referred to two types of reliability that case study researchers must be concerned with, external and internal reliability:

External reliability addresses the issue of whether independent researchers would discover the same phenomenon or generate the same constructs in the same or similar settings. Internal reliability refers to the degree to which other researchers would, given a set of previously generated constructs, match them with data in the same way, as did the original researcher. External and internal reliability face threats due to such factors as the researcher’s role in the study and with participants, the sampling strategy and choice of informants, the particular social, physical, and interpersonal context and settings studied, the definitions of key concepts or constructs guiding the study, and the data collection and analysis approaches used. (p. 210).

To control for these threats to external and internal reliability, the researcher provided accurate and thorough descriptions of the role of the researcher as a participant observer, purposeful sampling strategy used for this study, narrative concerning the social and interpersonal context of the setting, drawings of the physical layout of the setting and definitions of concepts. Since data collection and analysis also pose threats, multiple sources for data collection was utilized and data was triangulated to ensure reliability.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) also discussed validity concerning qualitative research. They defined validity as the extent of the accuracy of findings. Like reliability, validity can be separated into two types, internal and external validity. Citing Goetz and LeCompte (1984), Goodwin and Goodwin provided definitions for internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to whether researchers are
actually measuring what they think they are observing or measuring. External validity refers to the generalizability of findings. In qualitative research, several threats to internal and external validity exist.

Threats to internal validity include history, maturation, observer, selection, attrition or mortality, and spurious conclusions. History is defined as the natural changes in the phenomenon being studied due to history and other events. Maturation is defined as a failure to completely understand participants’ definitions of appropriate or normative behavior for a given context, age, or developmental stage. Observer is defined as misinterpreting or going beyond what is actually observed due to researcher/observer subjectivity, limited time in the field, limited data collection, or using single rather than multiple methods. Selection is defined as purposeful sampling inadequately described. Attrition or mortality is defined as the loss of sample participants during the study. Spurious conclusions are defined as inappropriate, incomplete, or faulty conclusions that occur if the researcher fails to examine alternative explanations of results and the various or multiple perspectives of participants, as well as the researcher’s own personal subjectivity.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) stated “Qualitative researchers recognize that change is a natural part of the phenomenon they study, so they do not attempt to control it-just to document it well” (p. 140). Therefore, the researcher for this study carefully recorded data to minimize threats due to history and maturation. Possible observer effects such as the researcher’s personal subjectivity were minimized because of the use of multiple data collection methods. A detailed description of the sampling procedure and participants minimized the threat of selection due to the use
of purposeful sampling. Attrition and mortality were not threats to this study because all participants remained a part of the study from beginning to the end. Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) stated “Researchers can combat the problem of drawing spurious conclusions by collecting all sorts of data, spending a lot of time in the field, searching for negative or discrepant cases during data collection and analysis, and seeking an independent review of the entire research process at its conclusion” (p. 142). As a result, the researcher for this case study addressed the issue of spurious conclusions by spending time weekly visiting the field site to collect different types of data through interviews, observations, and document analysis. The data collected was carefully analyzed to uncover any discrepancies. Additionally, the research process was reviewed by the researcher’s doctoral committee.

External validity is also a concern for qualitative researchers. Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) consider factors that limit a study’s comparability and translatability as threats to external validity. Comparability refers to how well the components of a study are described to allow other researchers of similar phenomena to make comparisons. Translatability refers to how well the researcher uses theories, definitions, and data-collection techniques to enable other researchers to understand and use them.

Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) discussed four threats to the external validity of a study as selection, setting, history and construct or theoretical effects. Selection refers to the extent to which the researcher has adequately described subjects and sites to enhance the study’s comparability to others. Setting refers to a type of hawthorne effect which affects the context of the research and the nature of concepts derived due
Goodwin and Goodwin (1996) suggest that researchers provide complete descriptions, compare the observer’s records to participants’ accounts and contrast research findings to prior existing research outcomes to combat external validity. Per Goodwin and Goodwin’s suggestions to increase the external validity of the study, the researcher provided thorough descriptions of occurrences during the participants’ experience. Additionally, the researcher corroborated records from classroom observations to participant’s accounts of their experiences. The researcher made weekly visits to the site to document occurrences. The researcher also interviewed participants and documented the participants’ perceptions about occurrences. Information obtained from these sources was analyzed to compare and contrast findings. A final method to increasing this study’s external validity was to compare and contrast the findings with prior research findings from other studies.

**Participants**

The participants for this study were pursuing Master of Science degrees in elementary education. In order to pursue a graduate degree at Hunt University, students must hold a bachelor’s degree from an institution with regional accreditation or request consideration from the academic dean of the college to which they wish to
apply prior to submitting an application. Additionally, they must have a minimum grade point average of 2.75 on a 4.00 scale on the last two years of undergraduate academic work, or a 3.0 on a minimum of 24 semester hours of graduate level courses. If the student has a lower grade point average, they may be granted provisional admission, if recommended by the graduate coordinator and supported by the academic dean.

In the Department of Education at Hunt University, a total of 55 graduate students are currently enrolled seeking the Master of Science degree in elementary education. Of the 55 students, 35 students were enrolled in the course being studied. From this population of 35 students, 12 participated at the host site and 23 participated at the distance site. The 12 students at the host site agreed to participate in this study. The students were given letters of consent to be signed if they agreed to participate in the study (Appendix B). All 12 participants were enrolled in the course to fulfill degree requirements for a Master of Science degree in elementary education. The participants all had undergraduate degrees in education and teaching experience that ranged from one month to 14 years.

Of the 12 participants, eight were European American females; three were African American females; one was an African American male. The age ranges for participants were the following: three (18 to 22), six (23 to 30), one (31 to 40), and two (41 to 50). Actual ages of participants are separate from information about them to protect their identity. While descriptions of the participants are provided to help the reader visualize the type of participants in this study, pseudonyms were used instead of participants’ actual names. The following is a description of each participant’s
ethnicity, teaching experience and mileage traveled to take this course at Hunt University.

Betty

Betty is a European-American female. She is presently a kindergarten teacher with a total of three years of teaching experience. She has also taught seventh through twelfth grade students. She lives in a community located approximately 60 miles from Hunt University.

Brenda

Brenda is a European-American female. She is currently a kindergarten teacher with 14 years of teaching experience, but taught second grade students for three of those years. She lives in a community approximately 45 miles from Hunt University.

Jasmine

Jasmine is an African-American female. She is a first year teacher of fifth grade students. She also had the experience of teaching third grade students during her student teaching experience. She resides in a community 20 miles from Hunt University.

Kristy

Kristy is a European-American female with nine years of teaching experience. She is in her fourth year of teaching third graders. Her experience includes teaching students at daycare, first and fourth through sixth grades. She resides 30 miles from
Hunt University.

Jody

Jody is an African-American female. She is a full time graduate student not currently teaching. However, she has one and a half years of experience as a public school teacher of kindergarten and fourth grade students. She resides approximately 30 miles from Hunt University.

Alexis

Alexis is a European-American female. She has three years of experience working with children in a daycare setting. In addition, she had the experience of teaching third grade students in a public school setting for one month. She resides 25 miles from Hunt University.

William

William is an African-American male currently teaching sixth grade students. He has two years of teaching experience. His place of residence is located approximately 114 miles from Hunt University.

Jessica

Jessica is a European-American female. Her experience with children includes teaching pre-kindergarten for one summer and coaching for three years. She is currently a coach and resides approximately five miles from Hunt University.
Monica

Monica is a European-American female. She is a first year teacher teaching sixth grade students. She also had the experience of teaching second graders during her student teaching experience and tutoring seventh graders. She resides approximately 25 miles from Hunt University.

Stacy

Stacy is a European-American female. She is a first year teacher teaching first grade students. During her undergraduate program, she gained experience teaching pre-kindergarten, second, and fourth grade students. She resides approximately five miles from Hunt University.

Barbara

Barbara is an African-American female. She is not currently teaching, but is working in a school setting as a Parent Coordinator. Her teaching experience includes teaching second graders for two years. She resides approximately 40 miles from Hunt University.

Susan

Susan is a European-American female. She is currently teaching third grade students and has a total of 12 years of teaching experience. She has also taught first and fifth grade students. She resides approximately five miles from Hunt University.
Instrumentation

The instruments used to collect data for this study were the researcher and four surveys. These instruments were a part of the research design and helped to ensure that data was collected from various sources to increase the validity of the study. The following is a description of the specific instruments used to collect data.

Case Study Researcher

For this case study, the researcher served as an instrument by which data was obtained by observing and interviewing. The researcher observed participants at the host site throughout the course of the semester and conducted interviews of participants during the last three class meetings. Gall et al. (2003) stated concerning a qualitative study, “The researcher is the primary measuring instrument” (p. 445). In a qualitative study, the researcher serves the purpose of collecting data on participants involved in the study by becoming personally involved in the phenomenon being investigated. For this research study, the researcher served as an instrument by collecting data through observations, interviews and analysis of documents.

Observations

Observation is a very important part of qualitative research. Observation allows the researcher to compile his or her own version of occurrences in the phenomenon being investigated, independent of participants. A researcher’s observations serve as an alternate data source which aids in providing a thorough description of the phenomenon (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003).
To collect data, the researcher made classroom anecdotal observations as a participant-observer. Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) explained that the participant-observer role is one where the researcher observes and interacts closely enough with individuals to establish a meaningful identity within their group. By establishing a meaningful identity within the group, the researcher is able to develop a relationship with participants so that they feel comfortable sharing their perceptions.

While participating in class discussions, the researcher also took field notes of observations. Field notes are the notes written by the researcher of the phenomenon being investigated while at the site of the study. Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) explained that quality field notes in a research study are descriptive and reflective, detailed and concrete, and include visual details when appropriate. For this study, the researcher began each observation with a sketch of the physical layout of the classroom environment, including where participants were seated to describe the physical setting. Comments made by individuals, as well as dialogue between participants, were included in detailed and concrete field notes taken by the researcher to provide thick description and to re-create the situation as much detail as possible.

Interviews

To collect data for this study, the researcher conducted interviews during the final three class meetings. Notes were taken on an Interview Documentation Form (Appendix D) developed by the researcher. To ensure accuracy of notes taken during interviews, all interviews were recorded with a tape recorder and the tapes were
transcribed. During the first two of these class meetings, individual interviews were conducted with the 12 participants at the host site.

Documents

Documents are an important part of case study research. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), documents can be classified as official, personal, or popular culture. Official documents include, but are not limited to memorandums, minutes from meetings, newsletters, policy documents, proposals, students’ records, brochures and pamphlets. Personal documents include documents diaries, letters and autobiographies which provide first-person narrative to describe an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs. Popular culture documents include videos, educational and feature films, magazines, television and advertisements. Researchers often find documents very beneficial for supporting data collected from interviews and observations. While some may yield only factual information, others may yield rich descriptions of important information about participants’ perceptions of their world. For this study, documents for review are categorized as official documents. The documents to be reviewed will include four surveys and interview documentation forms.

Beginning of Course Survey

As part of the instructor’s effort to evaluate the students’ perceptions of the first night of class, the Beginning of Course Survey (Appendix D) was administered. A review of the literature stresses the importance of evaluating instructor and course effectiveness. As a result, the researcher sought to develop an instrument to assess
student perceptions in these two areas. While no information on the reliability and validity of the adapted instrument was available, the questions were applicable to the study and yielded the data that the researcher needed to evaluate course and instructor effectiveness. The instrument was utilized with this intent in mind.

The assessment requested a rating of the instructor’s effectiveness. Participants were instructed to indicate whether they deemed the instructor’s performance as: (a) very effective, (b) effective, (c) somewhat effective, or (d) not effective. Additionally, students were asked to complete the following questions: What characteristics contributed to the instructor’s teaching effectiveness during tonight’s class meeting? Were there factors that inhibited your learning tonight? If yes, what were they and why? This survey was administered on the first night of class to solicit students’ initial perceptions. The intent of the researcher was to determine students’ perceptions at the beginning of the course and compare those perceptions to their perceptions at the end of the course. Additionally, another intent of the instructor was to determine factors that inhibited students’ learning and to address and/or eliminate those factors.

**End of Course Evaluation**

The *End of Course Evaluation* (Appendix D) was developed by the researcher at the host site and distance site. It was adapted from an instrument formerly developed by Biner (1993). The instrument was administered to the students at the last class meeting to assess the following six areas: quality of instruction, use of technology, quality of communication, accessibility of the instructor, quality of the
course, and perceptions of the convenience of the off-site location in relation to the course. The instrument consisted of 10 items for analysis. For the first five questions on the survey, students were prompted to use a rating scale of one to ten. As predetermined by the researcher, one on the scale was the lowest and ten was the highest. Additionally, the survey contained four open ended statements that allowed participants to respond to the quality of instruction, communication with the instructor, use of technology and accessibility of the instructor. The final item asked participants at the distance site to use a five point likert scale to submit a response about the convenience of the distance site location in regard to the course. Participants at the host site also answered the question. Since for one class meeting, the instructor traveled to the distance site to instruct from there, the host site participants viewed this question as applicable to them also based on their experience for that class meeting. As a result, they responded to the final item and data was analyzed.

**Student Evaluation of Faculty**

The *Student Evaluation of Faculty* (Appendix D) was administered to the students at the last class meeting to obtain data to evaluate the instructor’s performance during the course. Since prior research stresses the importance of evaluating instructor effectiveness, this instrument was chosen for use by the researcher to obtain data on the effectiveness of the instructor to make recommendations to replicate or enhance the effectiveness of future courses being offered to host site students.
Per telephone conversation with Dr. Johns, a professor in the Department of Sociology at Hunt University, the researcher discovered that the instrument has been utilized for over 20 years. Dr. Johns stated that the instrument was developed in 1980 by ten professors from five departments at Hunt University in an effort to fulfill a request from the Office of the President and the Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Effectiveness. The survey is used to assess the performance of professors in an effort to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning at the institution. However, information concerning the validity and reliability of the instrument has not been maintained by the university. In accordance with institutional guidelines, the instructor provided the instrument for administration by the researcher to students on the final night of class. Since it yielded pertinent information for the study under investigation, the researcher chose to use the data for this study as well as for institutional purposes.

Consisting of 10 close ended questions and two open ended questions, the survey takes five minutes to administer. The 10 close ended questions use a five-point Likert scale to evaluate the effectiveness of the instructor. The two open ended questions solicit students’ responses to the following two questions:

1. What did you like most about this course?
2. What improvements would you suggest?

Distance Learning Technology Survey

At Hunt University, courses offered through the Division of Continuing Education must also be evaluated to determine course effectiveness. As a result, the
Distance Learning Technology Evaluation (Appendix D) is utilized to obtain demographic data about participants, as well as their perceptions of the use of technology, interaction between participants, management of the course and support of students. In accordance with institutional guidelines, the survey was provided by the instructor for the researcher to administer to participants on the final night of class to solicit their perceptions of the above mentioned areas. Since no information on the validity and reliability of the instrument was available from the university, the researcher conducted a review of the literature to determine areas worthy. As a result, the researcher deemed the data collected from this survey to be pertinent to this study and worthy of inclusion.

The instrument consisted of 26 items for analysis. The instrument takes approximately 15 minutes to administer. Items for analysis include four open ended statements to be completed. Seven of the 26 items request demographic data. Nine items request the use of a likert scale to rate the participants’ level of agreement with statements related to technology and interaction. Six additional items request the use of a likert scale, but seek ratings pertaining to participants’ levels of agreement concerning course management and student support issues.

Limitations of the Surveys

A limitation to this study that should be noted at this point is that the researcher was unable to obtain information concerning the validity and reliability of instruments which were used for the study. As previously mentioned, two instruments, the Beginning of Course Evaluation and End of Course Evaluation, were
constructed by the researcher as adaptations of instruments found during the 
literature review. No information concerning the validity and reliability of the original 
instruments was available. These instruments were constructed to gather data 
necessary to adequately evaluate this phenomenon. The other two instruments, 
*Student Evaluation of Faculty* and *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation*, were 
required instruments for use by the Department of Education at Hunt University to 
evaluate faculty and continuing education services.

**Procedure**

The course was offered simultaneously to 12 students at the host site and 23 
students at the distance site as a distance education course for the first time. 
Permission was obtained from the Institutional Review Board to conduct a study 
investigating the host site participants’ perceptions of their experiences in the course, 
*Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education* (Appendix A). On the first night of 
class, the students were asked if they were willing to participate in the study. All 
students agreed to participate and signed the required consent form. As participants in 
the study, they were assured that their participation was not a requirement and that 
they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Additionally, they 
were assured of confidentiality of their responses.

Five research questions guided this study. The researcher analyzed data 
collected from observations, interviews, and surveys to determine the following:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?
2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?
3. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?

4. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?

5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at the host site?

As specified on the course syllabus (Appendix C), class meetings were held once a week on Tuesday nights for three hours. The first class meeting took place on the first scheduled night for classes in August. The final class meeting took place in December. Of the sixteen class meetings scheduled, fifteen were held in the classroom. One class meeting was held at the library to research topics that were covered in class. Participants at the host and distance site received instruction from the same instructor. For one class meeting, the instructor traveled to the distance site to instruct from that site.

Class procedure was very similar each Tuesday night. A faculty assistant was present to assist the instructor at the host site. A technician was present at each site to operate the technology. All participants, as well the instructor, faculty assistant, presenters, researchers and other students used microphones to communicate with participants at the distance site.

The instructor began class promptly at 6:00 p.m. The instructor or faculty assistant facilitated class discussions. According to the syllabus, students were given required reading assignments. They were to read information prior to class and be prepared to discuss topics in class with the instructor, faculty assistant and students at
the host and distant sites. The students at both sites were also responsible for presenting on specific topics. Guest speakers visited both sites to share information for specified topics of discussion.

The host and distance site participants were connected through the use of interactive video network. This technology allowed participants to see and communicate with students at both of the sites, the presenters and the instructor during class. Two doctoral students were present at the host site and one doctoral student was at the distance site for the purpose of data collection. One of the doctoral students at the host site served the purpose of collecting data related to the instructor to be analyzed for a separate study to determine the instructor’s perceptions of course effectiveness while the doctoral student for this study collected data on the host site participants to gain information about their perceptions of course effectiveness.

The use of electronic mail played a significant role in this study. A review of the literature stresses the importance of instructor accessibility to students. Participants in this study utilized electronic mail as one way of communicating with the instructor outside of class. Additionally, the instructor permitted the submission of class assignments by electronic mail. Electronic mail submitted by participants was filed and maintained by the instructor.

**Data Analysis**

Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003) discussed reflective analysis as an approach to data analysis of case study research. “Reflective analysis is a process in which the researcher relies primarily on intuition and judgment in order to portray or evaluate
the phenomenon being studied” (p. 459). By utilizing reflective analysis, the researcher chooses to rely on his or her own intuition rather than on technical procedures employed by using a category classification system.

Reflective data analysis is the best approach for this particular case study as it is closely associated with the phenomenology, which is the theoretical framework for this research study. Additionally, reflective analysis is also well suited for thick description which will be utilized to explain the phenomenon being evaluated in this study.

Reflective analysis also allows for the discovery of constructs, themes, and patterns. A construct is defined as a concept inferred from commonalities among phenomena being observed which can be used to explain that phenomena. A pattern is an inference made in case study research that a phenomenon within or across a case is systematically related to another. A theme is defined as an inference that a feature of a case is salient and characteristic of the case (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 2003).

Five research questions guided this study. The researcher analyzed data collected from observations, interviews, and surveys to answer the following research questions:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?
2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?
3. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?
4. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?
5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at the host site?

Data was collected to answer the five research questions from observations, interviews and analysis of survey documents submitted by participants. As a result, the researcher obtained both qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher conducted individual interviews of participants, made classroom observations and analyzed survey documents to collect data for this study. Interviews and observations, as well as open ended questions on surveys yielded qualitative data.

To analyze this data, the researcher used intuition and judgment to draw conclusions, as well as actual statements by participants to determine their perceptions concerning the five research questions that guided the study. Additionally, data collected from surveys was triangulated with data from observations and interviews to ensure that the researcher drew accurate conclusions.

**Summary**

This chapter presented the methods used to conduct this research study. The theoretical framework for the study was based on the phenomenological perspective. Case study, as the design for this research, was discussed. Also included in this chapter was the purpose of case study research, as well as the validity, reliability, advantages and disadvantages of case study research. Twelve graduate students at Hunt University participated in the study. Data were obtained through the use of five instruments, the researcher and four surveys, as well as through observations and
interviews. The procedure carried out by the researcher was also described.

Reflective analysis was discussed as the method of analyzing the data collected.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of host site participants concerning a shared distance learning experience. This chapter presents the results and a discussion of data obtained from host site participants in this study.

The researcher in this study utilized the following data sources: classroom observations, individual interviews and analysis of survey documents. Classroom observations were made for eleven of fourteen class meetings with the researcher assuming the role of participant-observer. An individual interview was conducted with each of the participants during two of the final three nights of class. Documents analyzed included four surveys.

The following five research questions guided the study:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?
2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?
3. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?
4. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?
5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at the host site?
Data Sources

Observations

The researcher for this study elected to observe class meetings regularly to gather as much data as possible. As a result, data was collected from observations of eleven out of fourteen class meetings. The researcher assumed the role of participant-observer and actively participated in class discussions as appropriate.

Individual Interviews

Individual interviews were conducted during two of the final three nights of class. Each student was asked to leave the classroom setting for approximately 15 minutes to be interviewed by the researcher in another available classroom. All 12 students agreed to participate in the individual interviews. Six interviews were conducted on the first night. The final six interviews were conducted on the second night. Students were willing to openly discuss their perceptions of the course. Prior to the interviews, the researcher determined that a semi-structured interview would be conducted with each interviewee. Prior to the interviews, the researcher had participated in class as a participant-observer. Participating in the class in this capacity had allowed the researcher to establish a rapport with the participants. The researcher and participants often talked informally during breaks about their perceptions of the course.

As a result, the researcher decided that a semi-structured approach would be the best format to utilize to conduct the interviews. Therefore, she developed an
interview documentation sheet (Appendix D) with nine areas of protocol to be discussed during the interviews. The protocol was to guide the discussion, but allow the participants and researcher enough flexibility to discuss any other pertinent information to gather all relevant data to accurately evaluate the experiences of these participants concerning their perceptions of their experience in this course. The nine areas of protocol were the following: (a) prior experience with distance learning, (b) host site participants’ perceptions of shared participation in this course with distance students, (c) perceptions of shared participation, (d) willingness to participate in another course offered simultaneously to distance students, (e) suggestions to improve the program for future host site participants, (f) preference for traditional or distance learning course, (g) advantages of participating in this course, (h) disadvantages of participating in this course, and (i) current perceptions of the course in comparison to perceptions at the beginning of the semester.

Beginning of Course Evaluation

The Beginning of Course Evaluation requested participants to respond to three questions. The first question asked students to rate the effectiveness of the quality of instruction of the course using the following scale: (a) very effective, (b) effective, (c) somewhat effective, or (d) not effective. The second question asked participants to identify characteristics that contributed to the instructor’s teaching effectiveness during the class meeting. The third question asked participants to identify any factors that might have inhibited their learning during the class meeting. The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain participants perceptions of the first night of class. The
instructor wanted to obtain this data to evaluate the first night of class, as well as make some determinations about how to proceed with instruction to ensure that both groups of participants achieved the desired goals and objectives of the course.

**Student Evaluation of Faculty**

The *Student Evaluation of Faculty* instrument consisted of statements to be rated and two open ended questions. The instrument specified that students should use a five point likert scale to respond to the statements. Additional space was provided beneath each open ended question for students to write their responses to the questions. This instrument is traditionally administered at Hunt University at the conclusion of each course offered in an effort to evaluate the quality of instruction offered to students.

**Distance Learning Technology Evaluation**

Another pertinent document analyzed was the *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* instrument. It consisted of 26 items for analysis which included four open ended statements. Seven of the items requested demographic data. Nine items requested the use of a likert scale to rate the participants’ level of agreement with technology and interaction in the classroom. Six additional items requested the use of a likert scale, but sought ratings pertaining to participants’ levels of agreement with course management and student support issues. The final four items were open ended questions that requested participants to respond to the following four questions:

1. What did you like the best about the distance learning course you are taking?
2. What did you like the least about the distance-learning course you are taking?

3. What would make this distance learning course a more effective learning experience?

4. Are there any other comments about the course you are taking?

As a result of the items for analysis on this instrument, data was obtained in regard to student demographics, technology usage, instructor-student interaction, student-student interaction, course management, student support and course effectiveness.

**End of Course Evaluation**

The End of Course Evaluation adapted from Biner (1993) by the host and distance site researchers was administered to the students at the last class meeting and assessed the following six areas: quality of instruction, use of technology, quality of communication, accessibility of the instructor, quality of the course and perceptions of the convenience of the distance location in relation to the course. This evaluation instrument was divided into three areas. The instrument consisted of ten items for analysis. For the first five areas on the survey, students were prompted to use a rating scale of one to ten. One on the scale was the lowest and 10 was the highest. Participants were instructed to rate only one response per item on the five areas assessed. Additionally, the survey contained four open ended items. For these items, participants were asked to make specific comments about the quality of instruction and communication, as well as the use of technology and the accessibility of the instructor. A final item asked participants to use a five-rating likert scale to submit a response about the convenience of the distance site location in regard to the course.
Motivation for Course Enrollment

The first research question was to identify the reason that students enrolled in this particular course. The researcher was seeking to discover motivational factors that would encourage future students to participate in a course offered in this capacity. During classroom observations, the researcher recorded in field notes that the instructor answered this question on the first night of class. She explained the course syllabus (Appendix C) and requirements for each group of students. Pertaining to host site participants, she explained that the participants at the host site were enrolled in the course to fulfill the requirements to complete Master of Science degrees in Elementary Education.

The information provided by the instructor on the first night of class was substantiated during individual interviews. When prompted to elaborate on course enrollment, all participants independently expressed that they enrolled in the course to fulfill the requirements to complete the Master of Science degree in Elementary Education. As a result, the researcher concluded that the host site participants’ motivation to enroll in this course was to fulfill degree requirements.

Additionally, the Distance Learning Technology Evaluation (Appendix D) revealed that students enrolled in the course to fulfill degree requirements. Data from open ended questions on surveys revealed that participants felt that enrolling in a course offered in this capacity seemed to be very advantageous for students at a distance from a university. The participants at the host site expressed that the course
offered individuals that might not otherwise be able to obtain an advanced degree an opportunity to gain access to higher education.

In the literature review, Charp (2000) discussed today’s distance learners as individuals who would do not have access to traditional higher education programs due to their jobs, family responsibilities, or inability to travel to a university. However, the technology revolution has made it possible for students to obtain higher education experiences regardless of their circumstances. The majority of the participants at the host site viewed this course as advantageous for students in such predicaments.

**Quality of Instruction**

The second research question was to obtain data about the quality of instruction offered to students who participated in this course offered simultaneously to students at the distance site. Birnbaum (2001) defined quality instruction as instruction that meets the educational needs of the students. The review of related literature revealed the importance of quality instruction in distance learning courses to ensure that students participating in these courses receive the same caliber of instruction as students in a traditional setting. To determine how host site participants perceived the quality of instruction, data was obtained from all data sources: classroom observations, individual interviews, and the four documents: *Beginning of Course Survey, End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation*, and *Student Evaluation of Faculty*. The researcher analyzed data from all
sources using triangulation to arrive at accurate conclusions and validate the findings of this study.

When analyzing the data concerning the quality of instruction, the researcher observed and recorded in field notes the responsibilities and training of the instructor as factors that would influence the quality of instruction provided to students. The instructor for this course served as the Department Head for this Department of Education. She had no prior experience with teaching distance learning courses or any course offered in this capacity. As a result of her unfamiliarity with providing instruction in this capacity, she received and participated in a one-day training session at the university to prepare her to teach this course.

Field notes from classroom observations revealed ways in which the instructor sought to deliver or provide quality instruction to the participants in the course. On the first night of class, a survey was administered to gain information from participants about their perceptions of the instruction. The survey was administered in an effort to gain information to ensure that the instructor met the educational needs of the participants enrolled in the course. The researcher also recorded in field notes throughout the course that the instructor was attentive to technology. During each class meeting, she conversed with the technician when necessary to ensure that all host site students were able to see the distance site students on the monitor. During the first three class meetings, students had difficulty remembering to use the microphones to speak to students at the distance site. As a result, she reminded students to use their microphones and speak loudly and clearly to converse with the
students at the distance site to ensure that the students were able to hear each other’s responses during class discussions.

The instructor solicited on-going student evaluations of themselves, the course, and her effectiveness. On the first night of class, the *Beginning of Course Survey* was administered at both sites. Under the direction of the instructor, the two researchers at the host site developed this informal survey to determine students’ perceptions at the beginning of the course about the course and the instructor’s effectiveness. The survey was administered in an effort to gain the perceptions of the participants to assist the instructor with planning on how to proceed with instruction to best meet the needs of the participants in this experience.

To provide quality instruction, the instructor promoted active student participation by both groups of students. One student commented that the course offered to both groups of students simultaneously seemed like one big classroom. The instructor promoted this active student involvement through her facilitation of class discussions, student and guest speaker presentations and students’ self evaluation. Students were responsible for classroom presentations on topics of study for the course. The researcher recorded in field notes that the instructor directed students to use the rubric included in the course syllabus (Appendix C) to perform a self-assessment to evaluate themselves on their presentations.

From individual interviews, the researcher discovered that all except one participant enjoyed contributing to the class by presenting information on topics of study. Additionally, all participants enjoyed the student-to-student interaction
between themselves and the distance site students. However, most students were
dissatisfied when the instructor traveled to the distance site for one class meeting.
Many expressed that throughout the course the instructor showed favoritism to the
distance site participants. Participants also felt that the pacing of the course was too
slow due to the technology. They wanted more feedback from the instructor about
their progress in the course and felt that the instructor needed to improve in the areas
of planning and course organization.

The *Beginning of Course Survey* was collected from each participant at the
host site on the first night of class. At this point during the semester, all participants
showed favorable attitudes concerning the instructor’s performance. Six participants
rated the instruction by the instructor as effective; the other six rating the quality of
instruction as very effective. Comments made on the open ended items for analysis
revealed that participants felt the instructor used questioning strategies, provided a
well structured lesson with appropriate pacing, solicited the active participation of all
participants, clarified information when necessary, demonstrated patience and
flexibility, answered all students’ questions, selected appropriate content for the
course, demonstrated enthusiasm and was very personable, and provided clear and
concise presentation of information as well as her expectations of students enrolled in
the course.

Participants’ ratings on the *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* also
revealed that seven of the 12 participants found the technology to be distracting.
Three supplied no response, but one indicated that he or she did not view the
technology as distracting. On this survey, seven of the participants indicated that they felt that the amount of instructor-student interaction was sufficient. Four supplied no response and one participant did not feel that there was an ample amount of interaction between herself/himself and the instructor. Concerning student-student interaction, nine participants felt that the amount of interaction was sufficient. Two participants supplied no response; one did not feel that there was enough student-student interaction. The amount of personal student engagement was another area used to assess the quality of instruction. Seven participants did not feel that there was sufficient personal student engagement. Four participants felt that the amount of personal student engagement was sufficient. One participant did not provide a response to this area of analysis. In contrast from data collected from interviews, the data collected from this instrument revealed that only one participant was not in favor of the instructor traveling to the distance site for one class meeting. Concerning this issue, seven participants provided no response; four indicated that they were not disturbed by the instructor’s absence at the host site; one was not in favor of the instructor instructing from the distance site. The individual interviews revealed that most participants were not in favor of the instructor not being present at the host site for that particular class meeting.

The Student Evaluation of Faculty instrument was administered to participants on the final night of class. This instrument contained five items that specifically pertained to the quality of instruction. On close ended items, one, two four, five and
eight allowed the researcher to assess the quality of instruction as perceived by the participants.

On item one, nine of the participants felt that the instructor covered interesting content and held the attention of the students. However, two students did not agree with the statement and one neither agreed nor disagreed. Item two which requested a rating concerning the participants’ perceptions of the relevance of topics to the course revealed that all 12 participants agreed with this statement. The fourth item solicited participants’ perceptions of presentations made by the instructor. Concerning this item, seven of the participants felt that the instructor’s presentations were organized. Two participants did not feel that the instructor was organized and three expressed no opinion. Item five sought to gain information concerning participants’ perceptions of whether the instructor knew if course content was being understood. Nine of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Three either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. The final close ended item analyzed to obtain information concerning the quality of instruction was number eight. This item sought information from participants concerning their perceptions of perceived competence after completing the course. The majority, nine, perceived themselves to be competent; while only one did not perceive herself to be competent. Two provided no response for analysis.

The final document analyzed to collect data concerning the participants’ perceptions of the quality of instruction provided to participants in this study was the
End of Course Evaluation. This document contained two items specifically related to the quality of instruction: one open ended item and one close ended item.

On the close ended item, participants were asked to rate the quality of instruction using a rating scale of one to 10. The researcher determined that a rating of five or better would mean that the participants perceived the quality of instruction to be effective. On this particular item, all participants supplied a rating of four or greater. The majority (11) of the participants rated the quality of instruction as effective, while one did not. Four participants supplied a rating of ten; two provided a rating of eight; one supplied a rating of six and four provided a rating of five. The one participant that rated the quality of instruction as ineffective provided a rating of four. On the open ended item concerning the quality of instruction, five participants rated the quality as effective, four rated the quality as ineffective, and three provided no response for analysis.

Accessibility of the Instructor

The third research question was designed to obtain data from participants concerning their perceptions of the instructor’s accessibility. Four data sources were utilized to obtain data: classroom observations, End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation, and the Student Evaluation of Faculty.

During classroom observations the researcher noted that the instructor was accessible to students before, during and after class meetings. The instructor arrived prior to the assigned time for class. As a result, participants had an opportunity to converse with the instructor prior to class. Additionally, she provided her electronic
mail address and instructed participants to correspond with her through electronic mail for class assignments. Therefore, the researcher noted that the instructor utilized electronic mail as a method of accessibility. The participants were also given her office and home telephone numbers. The instructor interacted with participants during class meetings through class discussion. Although she had a faculty assistant present for each class meeting to assist her in accommodating the participants’ needs, she was present for all class meetings except one during the entire semester. The researcher noted the instructor’s presence in the classroom after class on various occasions talking to participants, as well as during breaks.

The *End of Course Evaluation* contained two items which assessed the participants’ perceptions of the instructor’s accessibility. One item was close ended and required that participants use a rating scale of one to 10 with one being the lowest and 10 being the highest possible rating. For this particular item, six participants provided a rating of five or greater indicating that they felt that the instructor was reasonably accessible to them. Five participants supplied a rating of four or less. One participant chose not to respond to this item. The second item, which prompted participants to provide data concerning the accessibility of the instructor, was an open ended item. On this particular item, four of the participants indicated they felt the instructor was accessible to them and had no problem in this area. Specific comments supplied were the following: “This aspect was incredible. The instructor was always available. The instructor was great and she was a good contact also. I had no problem with the instructor in this area.” Three participants chose not to respond to this item.
Five participants were dissatisfied with the instructor in this area. Three of the six participants expressed that they did not receive responses to electronic mail that they sent to the instructor. The other two indicated that she was hard to catch in her office.

The *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* contained a close ended item which requested a rating from participants on their perceptions of the instructor’s accessibility. Specifically, item 10 asked participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: I was satisfied with the amount of interaction with the instructor during class. To rate this item, participants were to circle letters that represented strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree, or not applicable. The data collected from this instrument indicated that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the instructor in this area. Seven of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. While four of the participants did not rate agreement with the statement, they chose a rating of neutral on the item. Of the 12, one participant strongly disagreed with the statement.

On the *Student Evaluation of Faculty* instrument, item six pertained to the accessibility of the instructor. The specific item requested participants to provide a rating of a statement concerning the instructor’s accessibility. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the following statement: The instructor is reasonably accessible to students out of class. The majority of the participants did feel that the instructor was reasonably accessible to them. On this item, seven participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Four
participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed. One participant chose neither agree nor disagree.

**Quality of Communication**

The fourth research question was to obtain data from participants about how they would rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves. Three data sources were used to solicit participants’ perceptions concerning this research question. Data was collected from observations, *End of Course Evaluation* and the *Student Evaluation of Faculty*.

Data collected concerning the quality of communication was focused on written and verbal communication from the instructor. Some participants did not feel that they had sufficient feedback from the instructor throughout the semester on course assignments. While eleven of the participants did not express any difficulties with verbal communication provided by the instructor, one participant did state that she sometimes misunderstood the instructor’s directions or that they were not clear enough for her. Field notes from classroom observations revealed that the instructor communicated effectively with participants verbally during class meetings throughout the semester.

During the first class meeting, the researcher noted that the instructor thoroughly explained the course requirements as specified on the course syllabus. Throughout the course, she provided verbal feedback to participants on their presentations. Additionally, she observed and provided feedback on student participation during the course of the semester. At the beginning of the tenth class
meeting, the researcher noted that the instructor was walking around interacting with students. She walked to the desk at the front of the classroom and praised the students at the host site for their positive attitudes and high spirits.

Data pertaining to the quality of communication was collected from both open ended and close ended items on the *End of Course Evaluation*. For close ended items, participants rated the quality of communication on a scale of one to 10. Seven of the 12 participants rated the quality of communication with a score of six to 10. The remaining five participants supplied a rating of one to four. The results of analysis from these close ended items indicate that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the quality of communication between themselves and the instructor.

On open ended items, the participants supplied written comments to express their perceptions of the quality of communication. Five of the participants rated the quality of communication as sufficient. Two participants chose not to respond or provide comments on this issue. Three participants felt that the instructor did not provide a sufficient amount of feedback. One participant did not feel that the communication between the students at the host and distance sites was sufficient. A final participant did not feel that the instructor gave clear directions.

On the *Student Evaluation of Faculty* instrument, one item related specifically to the quality of communication. Item number three requested participants to rate their level of agreement with the following statement: The instructor communicates clearly. Participants were requested to choose either: (a) strongly agree, (b) agree,
(c) neither agree nor disagree, (d) disagree, or (e) strongly disagree to provide this rating. Analysis revealed that the majority of the participants agreed with the quality of communication provided by the instructor. Seven of the 12 participants indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. While two participants disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, the other three participants neither agreed nor disagreed.

Suggestions for Improvement

The fifth research question was designed to obtain data from participants about their recommendations or suggestions to improve the course for future students. Data to answer this research question was obtained from observations, interviews, and the following two of the four documents analyzed: Student Evaluation of Faculty and Distance Learning Technology Evaluation. In analyzing the data, the researcher found the following:

First, the participants felt that they should be told in advance that the course would be offered simultaneously to student at a distance site. After the enrollment process was complete for both groups of participants, the host site participants indicated that they felt meeting the distance participants at the beginning of the semester would have been very beneficial. By meeting the other participants at the beginning of the semester, they felt that they would have established better rapport with them earlier in the semester.

Second, these participants felt that the course should be well organized. Directions and objectives for the course should be stated clearly. Two participants
were dissatisfied that a textbook was required for the course, but it was not utilized in the class. The participants felt that the instructor should provide continuous feedback on academic progress throughout the semester. They stated that they wanted to know how they were progressing in the course throughout the semester. After each assignment was turned in, they wanted to know how the instructor rated their performance on that assignment. It was suggested that routine tasks, such as checking attendance be done by using a sign-in sheet. They did not feel it was necessary for the instructor to utilize class time to check attendance. One participant stated, “The instructor should take care of small business via the internet or email.”

Third, the participants felt that problems with technology should be handled swiftly. The technology at the host site was very distracting for participants. Specific comments were made about the technology slowing the pace of the class. In field notes, the researcher noted that participants had difficulty remembering to utilize microphones. They had difficulty remembering to press the button so that participants at the distance site could hear their comments. At the beginning of the semester, the instructor continuously reminded participants to press the button on the microphone before speaking.

A fourth and final suggestion was that an instructor or facilitator be located at the distance site to communicate with the instructor at the host site about participation of students at the distance site. If this was not possible, they suggested that the instructor travel back and forth between the two sites for class meetings. For example, the instructor should instruct from the host site for one class meeting. On the
following class meeting, she should instruct from the distance site. The host site participants were concerned that the distance site participants did not seem to be under the same scrutiny as they were with the instructor present at their site. Additionally, they felt that the distance site students received preferential treatment. They expressed during interviews that adaptations were made for the distance students that the host students did not receive. They felt that the requirements for both groups of participants should be exactly the same. The researcher referenced these comments with the field notes from classroom observation. In field notes, the researcher noted that the instructor explained the different requirements for the two groups during the first class meeting.

**Discussion**

**Literature Review**

In regard to the data collected to answer the research questions, the researcher reflected on the review of the literature. Harner, Brown, and Mayall (2000) studied the effectiveness of distance education by assessing the students’ knowledge, attitudes and behaviors related to successful distance education experiences and predicted students’ participation in future distance education courses. They found that the instructor and instructional activities are important factors vital for a successful distance education experience. For this study, the host site participants’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the instructor’s performance influenced their perceptions of the
shared distance learning experience. The study is aligned with research studies conducted by (Carter, 2001; Dominguez & Ridley, 2001; Harner et al., 2000).

Dominguez and Ridley (2001) found that distance education experiences are enhanced when a professor or instructor is comfortable with technology, when high quality technical delivery is provided and appropriate class activities and assignments are utilized. Data from the host site participants in this study is aligned with the Dominguez and Ridley research. The participants for this study made suggestions concerning the use of technology. They suggested that technical problems be handled swiftly to avoid disrupting the classroom environment. They were concerned that the technology slowed the pace of the class. While they considered the course content to be relevant, some were dissatisfied that a textbook was required for the course but was not utilized.

Carter (2001) surveyed the attitudes of students enrolled in a distance education course about course design, course interaction, course presentation, equipment and technology usage. Carter’s research revealed that distance education is effective when appropriate instructional materials are used, students have equal access to materials and equipment and prior plans are made to handle technical problems that arise. Like the research of Dominguez and Ridley, this research also placed emphasis on technology as a determiner of an effective distance learning course. The data collected from this study by host site participants corroborates these previously mentioned studies. As indicated previously in this chapter, participants were dissatisfied when technology seemed to slow the pace of the course. As noted in
field notes, participants’ usage of microphones at the beginning of the course did seem to slow the pace of the course. The instructor had to remind participants to press a button so their comments could be heard by participants at the distance site.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this case study was based on the phenomenological perspective. Researchers utilizing the phenomenological approach try to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). This case study investigated the perceptions of the participants enrolled in Teaching Strategies in Elementary Education.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998) stated, “While there are various brands of qualitative research, all share to some degree this goal of understanding the subjects from participants perspectives” (p. 24). As a result, this case study investigated the perceptions of the host site participants participating in a shared distance learning experience.

Green’s study (as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 1996) stated “Phenomenologists believe that multiple ways of interpreting experiences are available to each of us through interacting with others, and that it is the meaning of our experiences that constitutes reality” (p. 23). This case study was aligned with Green’s perspective of a phenomenology because the researcher interacted with participants to make observations, conducted individual interviews and administered surveys. The researcher collected data from multiple sources to reveal the perceptions of the
participants about the course as accurately as possible to ensure the validity of the findings of this study.

Summary

Data was collected from multiple sources for this study to investigate the perceptions of the participants enrolled in a shared distance education experience. Data sources included classroom observations, individual interviews and survey documents.

To analyze the data and answer each research question, the researcher triangulated data from three or more data sources. Gall et al. (2003) stated, “Use of multiple methods to collect data about a phenomenon can enhance the validity of case study findings through a process called triangulation.” For each research question, the researcher prepared matrices which revealed themes and data provided by participants from the multiple data sources. Where applicable, subcategories were identified and analyzed that emerged from the original themes.

On the first research question pertaining to participants’ motivation for course enrollment, the researcher triangulated data from classroom observation, individual interviews and the document, the Distance Learning Technology Evaluation. All data sources revealed that the participants enrolled in the course to fulfill the requirements of Master of Science degrees in Elementary Education.

The second research question pertained to the perceptions of participants relate to the quality of instruction received during the course. The researcher triangulated data from classroom observations, individual interviews, and the
following documents: *Beginning of Course Evaluation, End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* and *Student Evaluation of Faculty*. Overall, the results indicated that participants were satisfied with the quality of instruction.

The third research question solicited the participants’ perceptions concerning the accessibility of the instructor. The researcher triangulated data from classroom observations and the following documents: *End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* and the *Student Evaluation of Faculty*. The results of data analysis indicated that the majority of the participants did perceive the instructor to be reasonably accessible to them.

The fourth research question was developed to obtain participants’ perceptions of the quality of communication during the course. The researcher triangulated data from classroom observations and the following documents: *End of Course Evaluation* and *Student Evaluation of Faculty* revealed that the majority of the participants perceived the quality of communication to be effective for the course.

The fifth and final research question solicited participants’ suggestions or recommendations to improve the course for future students. Data was obtained and triangulated from classroom observations, individual interviews, and the following two documents: *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* and *Student Evaluation of Faculty*. Suggestions for improvement across data sources included the following:

1. Students should be told in advance that the course will be offered simultaneously as a distance learning course.
2. The course should be well organized.

3. Technology problems should be handled swiftly.

4. A facilitator should be located at the distance site to collaborate and communicate with the instructor at the host site concerning students’ participation at the distance site.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of participants enrolled in a course at Hunt University that was being simultaneously offered to students at a distance site. This chapter provides a summary of the first four chapters of this study. Additionally, this chapter includes conclusions based on the results of the data analysis to answer the five research questions for the study. The final section contains recommendations for the pilot program and additional research.

Summary

This case study investigated the perceptions of 12 participants enrolled in the course, Teachings Strategies in Elementary Education at Hunt University, which served as the host site. The course was being offered simultaneously as a distance education course to eleven participants enrolled at a distance site as part of a pilot distance education program.

After a review of the current literature on distance education, the researcher of this study developed the following five research questions to investigate the perceptions of the host site participants:

1. What motivated the participants at the host site to enroll in this course?
2. How do the participants at the host site perceive the quality of instruction?
3. How do the participants at the host site rate the quality of communication between the instructor and themselves?

4. To what extent do the participants at the host site perceive the instructor to be accessible?

5. What improvements can be implemented to ensure the success of the program at the host site?

The researcher obtained data from participants to answer the five research questions through classroom observations, individual interviews and data analysis of documents completed by participants. The documents analyzed included four surveys: Beginning of Course Evaluation, End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation, and Student Evaluation of Faculty.

Prior to development of the research questions, the researcher reviewed the literature on distance education. The literature summarized on distance education for this dissertation pertains to traditional and distance education, the development of distance education, advantages and disadvantages of distance education, the effectiveness of distance education, and student perceptions of distance education.

According to Beard and Harper (2002) and Inman and Kerwin (1999), distance education is perceived to be as effective as traditional delivery when certain conditions are present. Instructors must be knowledgeable, use quality instructional practices, be accessible to students inside and outside of class, solicit active participation from students, insure interaction between themselves and students, as well as between students, and handle technology problems promptly.
Distance education is currently evolving. As Prewitt (1998) indicated, distance education originated with correspondence courses, but has evolved tremendously throughout the years. Sherron and Boettcher (1997) also discussed the evolution of distance education. While distance education was originally offered through one-way communication methods such as radio, television and print, technological advancements have enabled it to be offered today through two-way communication methods such as electronic mail, chat sessions, bulletin boards, computer programs and audio and video conferencing.

Both students and institutions have found distance education to be an advantageous approach to higher education. Thoms (1996) found that advantages of distance education for students include better selection of courses, expansion of knowledge and better use of time, travel and finances. Gagne and Shepherd (2001) also noted advantages of distance education for students. They found that advantages for students include increased accessibility to courses, flexible scheduling, and less travel. Additionally, Gagne and Shepherd (2001) discovered that institutions find it advantageous because it allows them to offer more continuing education courses, workshops, and seminars; increase class sizes in appropriate courses; retain students by providing a variety of offerings; reduce costs by sharing speakers; accommodate the various learning styles of students; and provide continuous educational opportunities for students.

Although distance education has many advantages, some disadvantages must also been noted. (Collins & Deweese, 2001; Gagne & Shepherd, 2001). Institutions
face difficulties with short and long term organization, management, and educational changes. Access is limited for some populations. Problems with distance education programs exist due to inadequate supervision of students and a lack of sufficient interaction between students and faculty members. Retaining faculty, staff, and students is difficult in some situations.

Concerning the effectiveness of distance education, research studies conducted by Carter (2001), Dominguez and Ridley (2001), and Pettracchi (2000) suggest that distance education is a viable means of offering courses to students. When certain conditions are met, distance education is advantageous for institutions and students. As a result of technological advancements, distance education allows institutions to reach students that might not otherwise have access to courses being offered by the institution.

**Conclusions**

This research study contained five research questions to be answered from the data sources. Conclusions were drawn from the data collected and analyzed to answer each of the research questions.

**Conclusions about Participants’ Motivation for Course Enrollment**

The first research question sought to discover the participants’ motivation for course enrollment. Data was obtained from classroom observations, individual interviews and analysis of the document: *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation.*
All three sources of data revealed that participants enrolled in the course in an effort to fulfill the requirements for the Master of Science degree in Elementary Education.

The intent in collecting data to answer this research question was to discover factors that might motivate other individuals to take a course offered in this capacity. As a result, the researcher concludes that individuals might be willing to take a course offered in this capacity in order to fulfill degree requirements.

While it is advantageous for institutions to offer a course in this capacity, this research suggests that students should be made aware in advance that the course will be offered simultaneously to a distance site. The host site participants in this study regarded the course being offered in this capacity as particularly advantageous for the students at the distance site. They did not particularly regard the experience as overly beneficial for themselves. However, it is important to note that the majority of the participants at the host site did travel a distance to Hunt University to take this course. While Hunt University should continue to serve as a host site, it might be advantageous for Hunt University to add additional distance sites to offer this course to students at other locations.

**Conclusions about the Quality of Instruction**

The second research question pertained to the quality of instruction. Data sources utilized to answer this research question included observations, interviews, and analysis of the following documents: *Beginning of Course Evaluation, End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation, and Student Evaluation of Faculty*. Several themes emerged as determiners of quality instruction:
attending to technology, promoting student participation, presenting relevant course content, providing feedback to students on their progress and interacting with students. Overall, the majority of the participants in this study were satisfied with the quality of instruction provided by the instructor.

Participants at the host site that were dissatisfied with some aspect of the instructor’s performance were dissatisfied with the pacing of the course as a result of the technological equipment or difficulties or the lack of feedback from the instructor on their progress. However, field notes of classroom observations by the researcher revealed that the instructor was attentive to technology. During class meetings, she conversed with the technician when necessary to ensure that all host site participants were able to see the distance participants on the monitor. She reminded students to use their microphones and speak loudly and clearly to converse with the students at the distance site to ensure that the students were able to hear each other’s responses during class discussions.

Conclusions drawn from the data collected for this study indicate that the instructor is perceived effective if he or she attends to technological difficulties swiftly, promotes active participation by students, engages in meaningful interaction with students, presents relevant course content in a clear and concise manner and provides feedback to students on their academic progress throughout the course.

Conclusions about the Accessibility of the Instructor

The third research question pertained to the accessibility of the instructor. Data sources used included classroom observations and analysis of the following
documents: *End of Course Evaluation, Distance Learning Technology Evaluation*, and *Student Evaluation of Faculty.*

The instructor provided students with three ways of contacting her outside of class. As recorded in field notes, the instructor provided students with her electronic mail address, office phone number and home phone number on the first night of class. Additionally, she was accessible to students before, during and after class meetings. Analysis of data from the documents obtained revealed that the majority of the participants perceived the instructor to be reasonably accessible to them.

On the close ended item on the *End of Course Evaluation*, one-half of the participants rated the instructor as reasonably accessible to them, providing a score of five or greater. Five of the other participants did not feel that the instructor was reasonably accessible to them. One participant chose not to supply a rating. The participants’ responses on the open ended item provided insight into why they did or did not feel that the instructor was accessible to them. As a result, the researcher was able to determine that the instructor was regarded as inaccessible if emails were not responded to or if she was not in her office when the participants attempted to contact her either in person or by phone. The other two documents analyzed to triangulate the data revealed that the majority of the participants regarded the instructor as accessible to them.

The *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation* specifically provided the participants’ perceptions about the instructor’s accessibility during class. Data revealed that seven of the participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the
following statement: I was satisfied with the amount of interaction between the instructor and myself during class. Four of the participants chose a rating of neutral, indicating that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. The other participant strongly disagreed with the statement.

The *Student Evaluation of Faculty* provided data concerning the participants’ perceptions of whether the instructor was reasonably accessible to them out of class. Seven of the participants agreed or strongly agreed with the statement; four disagreed or strongly disagreed and one chose neither to agree or disagree with the statement.

Overall, the data suggests that the majority of these participants at this university regarded the instructor as reasonably accessible to them during and out of class. As a result, the researcher concludes from this data that the instructor in this study was viewed as accessible to the participants if she responded to electronic mail received from participants, was available to provide feedback to participants either by phone or through an office visit with participants. If this was not done, the instructor was perceived to be inaccessible to the participant.

**Conclusions about the Quality of Communication**

The fourth research question was developed to obtain participants’ perceptions of the quality of communication provided by the instructor. Data was obtained to answer this question from classroom observations and the following documents: *End of Course Evaluation* and *Student Evaluation of Faculty*. Written communication and verbal communication were the themes that emerged as determiners of the quality of communication.
The field notes from classroom observations indicated that the instructor communicated satisfactorily with participants verbally. She provided verbal feedback to students on presentations done in class. Additionally, she provided verbal feedback on student participation throughout the semester.

On the *End of Course Evaluation*, the participants’ responses to close ended items revealed that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the quality of communication received from the instructor. Using the rating scale, seven of the 12 participants rated the instructor with scores six to 10. However, the participants’ responses on the open ended items provided different results. Only five of the participants indicated that the quality of communication was sufficient; while five others did not feel that the quality of communication was sufficient. One of the latter five specifically commented about the quality of communication between the host and distance sites being insufficient. Two participants chose not to supply a written response on this item.

The *Student Evaluation of Faculty* also revealed that the majority of the participants agreed that the quality of communication provided by the instructor was sufficient. Seven of the 12 participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the instructor communicated clearly. Three provided no response and two either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the instructor communicated clearly.

The data provided for analysis indicated that the quality of communication provided by the instructor was sufficient for the majority of the participants. They perceived the quality of communication to be effective when the instructor provided
clear directions and gave feedback concerning participants’ progress on course assignments.

**Conclusions about the Participants’ Suggestions for Improvement**

The fifth research question was developed to obtain data concerning participants’ recommendations or suggestions to improve the course or program for future students. Data to answer this research question was obtained from classroom observations, individual interviews, and the following two documents: *Student Evaluation of Faculty* and *Distance Learning Technology Evaluation*. Four suggestions were recommended by participants to improve the course for future students:

1. Students should be told in advance that the course will be offered simultaneously as a distance education course.
2. The course should be well organized.
3. Problems with technology should be handled swiftly.
4. An instructor or facilitator should be located at the distance site to communicate with the instructor at the host site about the participation of students at the distance site.

The data suggested that the majority of the participants were satisfied with their experience in the course. However, they felt that the course could be more effective for future students if the potential students know in advance about the format for the course; the course is well organized; technological difficulties are
anticipated and handled swiftly and a facilitator is located at the distance site to communicate with the instructor at the host site about students’ participation.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The recommendations offered by the researcher are derived from an analysis of the data obtained for this study. The findings of this study should be utilized by the Department of Education at Hunt University to evaluate the success of this pilot distance education program between the host and distance sites.

**Recommendations for Additional Research**

Since two additional studies have been completed on this pilot distance education program for Hunt University, it is suggested that a study be done to compare the findings of the three studies to adequately evaluate the success of the program as applicable to the students at the host and distance sites, as well as the instructor.

In reviewing the literature on distance education, the researcher was unable to find any studies that specifically pertained to participants at a host site. It is recommended that additional research on participants at host sites be conducted to gather additional knowledge related to the quality of instruction.

Petracchi and Patchner (2001) collected data from two groups of graduate students, one group receiving instruction with the instructor present at the host site and the other receiving instruction by interactive television at a distance site. During the final week of the course, students were given a student satisfaction survey to
complete. Petracchi and Patchner used t tests to determine differences between the
two groups of graduate students on examinations, papers and final grades. Chi-square
was used to determine differences in the attitudes and experiences of the graduate
students on the student satisfaction survey. They found that both students at both
locations performed equally well. This case study was similar to the study conducted
by Petracchi and Patchner because the researcher for this study also sought to
evaluate the experiences of students involved in a distance education experience.
However, this case study did not compare groups of students. Therefore, it is
recommended that additional research be done to determine if the students at the
distance site and host site in this distance education experience performed equally as
well.

Recommendations for the Pilot Program

The purpose for this study was to investigate the perceptions of host site
participants about a shared distance learning experience. The Department of
Education was seeking to evaluate the pilot program to ensure that the program is
offered to students in the most effective manner possible. As a result of completion of
this study, the following recommendations are provided to assist with the evaluation
of the pilot distance education program and improve the program for future students:

1. Potential students should be told in advance that the course will be offered
   simultaneously to students at a distance site.

2. A facilitator should be provided at distance sites to communicate with the
   instructor about student participation.
3. Technology problems or difficulties should be anticipated and handled swiftly.

4. The instructor should provide ongoing feedback on course assignments throughout the semester.

5. The instructor should respond to electronic mail from students promptly.

6. The instructor should monitor the pacing of the course to avoid unnecessary delays.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM
FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH
HUNT UNIVERSITY

STATEMENT OF BOARD: ____________________ IRB DOCKET # 00-000

This is to certify that the research proposal entitled:

Evaluation of the Pilot Distance Elementary Education Project

And submitted by: Name:

Department: Education

Name of Advisor: N/A

To Sponsored Programs Administration for consideration has been reviewed by the Regulatory Compliance Officer or the IRB and approved with respect to the study of human subjects as appropriately protecting the rights and welfare of the individuals involved, employing appropriate methods of securing informed consent from these individuals and not involving undue risk in the light of potential benefits to be derived thereon.

Administrative Approval Date: 8/30/00 Expiration Date: 8/15/01

__ (A) Contingent upon receipt of _________________________________

X (B) All necessary documents were received

Expedited Approval Date: ___________ Expiration Date: ___________

__ (A) Contingent upon receipt of _________________________________

__ (B) All necessary documents were received

Full Board Approval Date: ___________ Expiration Date: ___________

__ (A) Contingent upon receipt of _________________________________

__ (B) All necessary documents were received
HU Regulatory Compliance Officer  Signature  Date

Institutional Review Board Member  Date
Hunt University
CONTINUING REVIEW
REPORT FORM

PI Name:  
Address:  

Advisor:

Funding status:  □Awarded  □Pending  □Not awarded  ☒No cost study

1. Number of subjects involved in the project (to date, if ongoing): 50
2. Were there any adverse events or unanticipated problems?
   ☒YES, Provide a detailed statement:
   □NO
3. Number of subjects who withdrew from the project: 0
4. Were there any complaints regarding the project?
   □YES, Provide a detailed statement:
   ☒NO
5. Is there any new information since the last IRB review that might impact the Board's understanding of the risks or benefits?
   □YES, Provide a detailed statement:
   ☒NO
6. Has the project been modified since the last IRB review?
   □YES, Have all changes been submitted for IRB approval:  □YES  □NO  
   ☒NO
7. Are you still collecting data?  □YES  ☒NO
8. Are your remaining activities confined to data analysis?  ☒YES  □NO
9. Projected end of project (data analysis complete): 5-15-05
10. Please attach a current consent form.

Principal Investigator ___________________________  Date ___________

Research Advisor (if applicable) ___________________________  Date ___________

OFFICE USE ONLY

Administrative Approved: ___________________________ Date ________
Expedited
Full Board  New expiration Date: ___________________________
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM
Dear Student:

I am the head of the Department of Education at Hunt University. I am conducting research to determine the benefits of offering undergraduate and graduate elementary education programs through Interactive Video Network (MIVN) at Hunt University. Please read the following carefully and sign below if you choose to participate. If you have questions, you may contact me directly at the university. If you have questions regarding the use of human subjects in research, please contact me at the Regulatory Compliance Office at the university.

By consenting to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in taped interviews, to complete surveys, to share some of your work samples, to allow video tapes of the class to be used for observation purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of this distance education class.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the study you may withdraw from the study with no negative effects. You may be assured that all data collected in this research will be used for the purpose of that it was gathered.

Sincerely,

________________________________ / Department Head

Student’s Name _____________________________
APPENDIX C
SYLLABUS
COURSE SYLLABUS

Teaching Strategies in
Elementary Education

Credit: 3 semester hours

Catalog Description:

Three lectures. A study of current issues in elementary education. Designed for elementary and school administration majors.

Objectives:

1. To understand the role of discourse in learning. CFPO 1
2. To gain insight into the value of elementary school and community partnerships. CFPO 3
3. To understand the importance of a teacher’s professional responsibilities and to practice lifelong learning. CFPO 2
4. To become a reflective practitioner through discussion and writing. CFPO 6

Topics To Be Covered:

I. National Board Certification
   B. National Standards
   C. Reflecting on Teaching
   D. Teacher Quality – Tennessee Studies
V. Teachers as Leaders
VI. Professional Responsibilities
   G. Communicating and Engaging Families
   H. Contributing to the School and District
   I. Growing and Developing Professionally
X. Integrating the Arts
XI. Technology Integration
XII. Addressing Differences
   M. Diversity
   N. Gender Bias
   O. Values Teaching
   P. Inclusion
XVII. Future of Education
   R. School Change
Suggested Student Activities:

1. Each student will write a personal goal directly related to one selected issue during the first class meeting. Each student will be responsible for reaching their goal and verifying it through a written paper, video, etc. at the last class meeting. This will be placed into the professional portfolio that will continue to be built throughout this graduate program.

2. Each student will engage in extensive research while creating and maintaining a “research box” consisting of recent journal articles based on current educational issues. The research box must include at least three articles on each selected issue/topic. One writing assignment must be completed for each topic. Students may choose from the suggested list and no choice may be repeated without approval from instructor. Student and instructor each will choose one writing project to be included in professional portfolio.

3. Each student will write an article to be submitted for publication in a refereed journal. This article must be related to one of the topics on the syllabus.

4. Students will be placed into teams and each team will be responsible for a mini presentation on each selected issue/topic.

Methods of Instruction:

Students will be responsible for reading, reflecting, analyzing, and writing from the subjects on the “Topics to be Covered.” Class generally will be organized around a discussion format based on group presentations and facilitated by the instructor.

Evaluation of Student Progress:

Final grades will be determined by evaluation of: a) journal article, b) group presentations, and c) research box. Group presentations and research box will be evaluated using a rubric. Students will develop the rubric for the research box. Small groups of 3-4 students will develop the rubric.
A member of each group will meet and complete the rubric for the class. (Students will be provided with a blank rubric form.) (or use the attached presentation rubric)

Texts:


Writing Project List

- Write a letter to your principal, superintendent, or school board regarding your future plans to go through the process of national board certification. Explain the process and be sure to include the depth of knowledge you will have to show. Ask for their support and help.

- After reading the national board standards for your certificate area, do you see your classroom in these standards? How? Are there changes you need to make? What are they and how will you make these changes?

- What is your five-year plan? Identify your goals and how you plan to obtain them. Why did you choose these goals? Why do you feel you will succeed?

- Create a brochure for your school. What are the special programs and awards? Who are the people who make a difference – children, parents, teachers, staff, administrators?

- Is Mississippi State University incorporating national board approaches in their teacher education program? Find how at least three other universities do incorporate national board approaches. Are they effective? Write a paper comparing the teacher education programs.

- Write and submit a grant proposal that will help you implement a specific program in your classroom or school.

- Write a one-page paper describing the ways videos can be utilized in the classroom to enhance instruction.

- Interview three other teachers about the topic of your choice. Write a one-two page paper about their views. Include the list of questions used for the interview.
· Write a reflection paper on the ways you have grown and developed professionally over the past two years. Analyze the effects on your classroom practice.

· Write a reflection paper on the ways that you have incorporated family and community into your classroom. Have your efforts with families been ongoing and interactive? Analyze the effects on your classroom practice.

· Teachers as Leaders: What does this mean to you? Is it important to be a teacher leader? Why? Are you a teacher leader? If not, what will you do to become a teacher leader? How will you encourage other veteran teachers, new teachers, and student teachers in your school/district to become teacher leaders?

· Create a survey on the topic of your choice. Distribute it to the other teachers in your school. Tally results and write an analysis of these results.

· Write a critical review of the topic of your choice after your readings and the class discussion.

· Set up a dialogue journal with a colleague or a parent of one of your students. What does this show you about your practice?

· Keep a log of your readings and your thoughts on each article.

· Write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper regarding the topic of your choice.

· Teacher Quality – does it really make a difference for children to have a high quality teacher? What are your views on this subject?

· The Light in Your Eyes – Why did you become a teacher? What keeps the light in your eyes?

· You have $1 million to spend on technology in your school. What would you purchase? Why? Who will make these decisions? Be sure to explain how your choices impact student learning.

· Write a proposal to your school librarian regarding the importance of the integration of arts into classroom practice. Ask for help in purchasing materials to achieve this goal.
## Assessment Rubric for Group Presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distinguished</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Presenters speak in a clear voice and show a flair for communicating with the audience.</td>
<td>• The presentation is as good as one receiving a distinguished rating, but there are one or two elements of the presentation that are less polished.</td>
<td>• The presentation is generally similar to one receiving a novice rating, but there are one or two elements that are relatively well done.</td>
<td>• Presenters are difficult to hear. The rates of speaking are too fast or too slow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rates of speech are appropriate.</td>
<td>• Speakers make eye contact with everyone and have no nervous habits, are appropriately dressed and have excellent posture.</td>
<td>• Presentation involves audience, allowing time for audience to think and respond.</td>
<td>• The speakers do not show much interest and/or enthusiasm in the topic. May sound like the speakers are reading the presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speakers make eye contact with everyone and have no nervous habits, are appropriately dressed and have excellent posture.</td>
<td>• Presentation involves audience, allowing time for audience to think and respond.</td>
<td>• Presentation is well organized with a beginning, middle, and end. There is a strong organizing theme, with clear main ideas and transitions.</td>
<td>• The speakers may have nervous habits that distract from presentation. The speakers are not presentable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Presentation involves audience, allowing time for audience to think and respond.</td>
<td>• Presentation is well organized with a beginning, middle, and end. There is a strong organizing theme, with clear main ideas and transitions.</td>
<td>• Information is complete and accurate. Clear evidence of research.</td>
<td>• Speakers do not involve audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Information is complete and accurate. Clear evidence of research.</td>
<td>• Information is complete and accurate. Clear evidence of research.</td>
<td>• Visual aids are well done and are used to make presentation more interesting and meaningful.</td>
<td>• Presentation shows little organization, unclear purpose, unclear relationship and/or transition between presenters, rambles or may seem like a list of facts. Lacks conclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual aids are well done and are used to make presentation more interesting and meaningful.</td>
<td>• Visual aids are well done and are used to make presentation more interesting and meaningful.</td>
<td>• Handout(s) are attractive, well organized and includes relevant information.</td>
<td>• Details and examples are lacking or not well chosen for the topic or audience. Lacks evidence of research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Handout(s) are attractive, well organized and includes relevant information.</td>
<td>• Handout(s) are attractive, well organized and includes relevant information.</td>
<td>• Appropriate length.</td>
<td>• Very little use and/or poor use of visuals with no handouts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appropriate length.</td>
<td>• Appropriate length.</td>
<td>• Appropriate length.</td>
<td>• Appropriate length.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography:


Wertheimer, L. K. (1995, August). Parents boo year-round schools at an orange school district hearing, opponents from around the state said the school system drains energy and disrupts families. *The Orlando Sentinel, D1.*


Interview Documentation Sheet

Tell participants that interview will be recorded, but responses will be kept confidential.

Protocol to be covered during the interview includes the following areas:

Area 1: Prior experience with distance learning.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Area 2: On-site participants’ feeling about shared participation with distance learning students.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Area 3: Shared participation in the course evokes the following feeling about distance learning:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Area 4: Willingness to take another course being offered simultaneously as a distance learning course.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Area 5: Suggestions to improve the distance learning course/program for future on-site participants.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Area 6: Preference for participating in a traditional course versus a distance learning course.

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________
Area 7: Advantages of shared participation in a distance learning course/program

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Area 8: Disadvantages of shared participation in a distance learning course/program.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

Area 9: Feeling about distance learning at the beginning of the semester in comparison to feelings at the end of the semester.

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________
Student’s Perceptions of the Quality of Instruction

Please respond to the following questions:

1. How would you rate the effectiveness of the quality of instruction of this course?
   _____ a. Very Effective
   _____ b. Effective
   _____ c. Somewhat Effective
   _____ d. Not Effective

2. What characteristics contributed to the instructor’s teaching effectiveness during the class meeting?

3. What factors, if any inhibited your learning during this class meeting?
End of Course Evaluation

The goal of the questions below is to obtain your evaluation of this course. 
INSTRUCTIONS: On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the lowest rating and 10 being the highest, please rate the following aspects of the course. Please circle only one response per item.

1. Quality of Instruction
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Use of Technology
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Quality of Communication
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. Accessibility of Instructor
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. Overall Quality of Course
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

INSTRUCTIONS: In the spaces below, please make specific comments about:

6. Quality of Instruction

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________

7. Use of technology

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
8. Quality of Communication

9. Accessibility of Instructor

Distance Learning Students Only. Do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

10. The convenience of the distance site location out weighs the negatives of the course.
   A. Strongly Agree
   B. Somewhat Agree
   C. Somewhat Disagree
   D. Strongly Disagree
   E. No Opinion

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS PROJECT.
Hunt University  
Office of the President  
and  
Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Institutional Effectiveness  
Student Evaluation of Faculty

Dear Student:  
Thank you for taking part in our efforts to evaluate the performance of your teacher. You are playing an important role in helping us to determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning at Hunt University. Copies of the results will be made available to the appropriate administrative personnel. Therefore, I am asking you to be diligent and fair with your responses. It is our goal to continue offering you a high quality of instruction and learning. We thank you again for your contribution to our student evaluation of teachers survey.  
Sincerely  
[Signature], President

Use the following evaluation scale shown to indicate your response to each item below.

SD - Strongly Disagree; You strongly disagree with the items as it applies to this course or instructor.  
(D) – Disagree; You disagree more than you agree with the item as it applies to this course or instructor.  
(?) – Neither Agree nor Disagree  
(A) – Agree; You agree more than you disagree with the item as it applies to this course or instructor.  
SA – Strongly Agree; You strongly agree with the item as it applies to this course or instructor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>?</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The instructor makes the material interesting and holds the attention of the class.</td>
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<td>2. The instructor makes the material relevant to my course of study.</td>
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<td>3. The instructor communicates clearly.</td>
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<td>4. The instructor’s presentations are well organized.</td>
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<td>5. The instructor knows if the course content is being understood.</td>
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<td>6. The instructor is reasonably accessible to students out of class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I have had to work hard in this course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I have become more competent in this area because of this instructor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Grading and evaluation procedures by the instructor seem fair and objective.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. If I take another course in this subject, I would like to have this instructor.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please respond in the space provided to the following two questions. If you need additional space, you may write comments on the back of this sheet.

1. What did you like most about this course?

2. What improvements would you suggest?
Distance Learning Technology Evaluation

For each course offered using interactive technology, students are asked to evaluate its technical and educational aspects. This survey is intended to evaluate the technical aspects of the delivery medium. The results will be used to modify existing practices and for planning future courses to better meet your needs. Your responses will be completely confidential and will not be seen by the instructor except in a summarized report with the other students' responses.

Course Name: 
Your Site: 
Year and Term: Fall 2000
Originating Site of Course:

1. Have you taken a class via interactive video before?
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. What was the reason for your enrollment in this course? (check as many as apply)
   ☐ Certification or re-certification
   ☐ Convenience of not having to travel so far
   ☐ Course was part of a degree program
   ☐ Career Advancement
   ☐ Other

3. Are you presently employed?
   ☐ Full-time
   ☐ Part-Time
   ☐ Not employed outside the home at this time

4. Age:
   ☐ 18 - 22 ☐ 41 - 50
   ☐ 23 - 30 ☐ 51 - 60
   ☐ 31 - 40 ☐ Over 60

5. How far did you have to travel (one-way) to get to this class?
   ☐ 0 - 20 miles ☐ 41 - 50 miles
   ☐ 21 - 30 miles ☐ Over 51 miles
   ☐ 31 - 40 miles

6. I have access to a computer at (check one only)
   ☐ home and work.
   ☐ home.
   ☐ work.
   ☐ no access.

7. I have access to the internet via a modem or direct connection at (check one only)
   ☐ home and work.
   ☐ home.
   ☐ work.
   ☐ no access.
Using the response key below, please circle the appropriate letter(s) to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements dealing with the technology and interaction in the classroom:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
N = Neutral
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
NA = Not Applicable

8. I think the technology makes learning more, exciting than in a traditional classroom.

9. It is more difficult to pay attention in an interactive video class than in a traditional class.

10. I was satisfied with the amount of interaction with the instructor during class.

11. I was satisfied with the amount of interaction with the other students during class.

12. It bothered me to have the instructor at a different site.

13. I did not ask as many questions as I would have in a traditional class.

14. I felt like I was a part of one big classroom.

15. Technical problems did not interfere with learning.

16. My level of satisfaction with the technology and instructor/student interaction for this course was:

   ☐ Very Satisfied    ☐ Satisfied    ☐ Not Sure    ☐ Dissatisfied    ☐ Very Dissatisfied

Using the response key below, please circle the appropriate letter(s) to indicate your level of agreement with the following statements dealing with course management and student support issues:

SA = Strongly Agree
A = Agree
N = Neutral
D = Disagree
SD = Strongly Disagree
NA = Not Applicable

17. The registration process was easy to complete.

18. Textbooks were easily obtained.

19. My site is comfortable (lighting, temperature, room to take notes, restroom facilities, etc.).

20. There was adequate technical support provided to correct problems associated with the system at my site.

21. If I request them, I receive video tapes of the class in a timely manner.

22. My level of satisfaction with the course management and student support for this course was:

   ☐ Very Satisfied    ☐ Satisfied    ☐ Not Sure    ☐ Dissatisfied    ☐ Very Dissatisfied
What did you like the best about the distance learning course you are taking?
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

What do you like the least about the distance learning course you are taking?
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

What would make this distance learning course a more effective learning experience?
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Any other comments about the course you are taking?
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for completing the technology evaluation.
Debra Lynn Williams-Carter
dlwilliams70@yahoo.com
303 Clements Avenue
Starkville, Mississippi 39759
(662) 324-3055

OBJECTIVE:
I am seeking a faculty position in the Department of Education.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION:

Mississippi State University, Starkville

- Doctor of Philosophy, Elementary Education
  December 2004
- Educational Specialist, Elementary Education
  December 1996
- Master of Education, Elementary Education
  July 1993
- Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education
  August 1992

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Overstreet Elementary School, Starkville, Mississippi
- Teacher, August 1997- Present
- Clinical Support Group Chairperson, August 2003-Present
- School Improvement Plan Committee Member, August 2001-Present
- Student Teacher School Supervisor, August 1997-May 2003
- Curriculum Committee School Representative, August 2001-May 2003
- Courtesy Committee Treasurer, August 2000-July 2002
- Staff Development School Representative, August 1998-July 2002
- Parent Teacher Association Representative, August 1997-July 1998

West Lowndes Elementary School, Columbus, Mississippi
- Reading Specialist, June 2002
- Teacher, August 1993- July 1997
- Student Teacher, January-May 1992

Mississippi State University, Starkville, Mississippi
- Curriculum and Instruction
  Faculty Graduate Assistant, July 2000
Graduate Assistant, August 1992- August 1993

- **Holmes Cultural Diversity Center**
  Graduate Assistant, June-July 1996 & June 1997

- **Housing and Residence Life**
  Apartment Manager, Arbour Acres, May 1993-August 1993
  Administrative Resident Assistant, Rice Hall August 1992-May 1993
  Resident Assistant, Cresswell Hall, July 1991-August 1992
  Desk Assistant, Hathorn Hall, March 1990-June 1991

**PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS:**
- National Education Association
- Mississippi Association of Educators
- Phi Delta Kappa, International

**HONORS & AWARDS:**
- National Board Certified Teacher
  National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
  2001-2002

**GRANT RECEIVED:**
Title Two Dwight Eisenhower Program Grant
Lowndes County Schools
“Measurement and Manipulatives”
1994-1995

**PRESENTATIONS:**
- “Aerodynamics Is a Dynamite Way to Teach Problem Solving”
  Mississippi Science Teachers Association Annual Convention
  Biloxi, Mississippi
  November 1995

- “Do We Need a Multicultural Curriculum”?
  Mid-South Educational Research Association
  Point Clear, Alabama
  November 1999

  Southern Early Childhood Association
  Birmingham, Alabama
  April 2000

- “Reading Is Fundamental”
  Overstreet Elementary School Family Support Team
  Starkville, Mississippi
January 2003

- “Reading for Understanding”
  Overstreet Elementary School Family Support Team
  Starkville, Mississippi
  September 2003

REFERENCES:

Dr. Gloria Correro
616 Sherwood Road
Starkville, MS 39759
662-418-0109

Mrs. Julia Jefferson, Principal
Overstreet Elementary School
307 South Jackson Street
Starkville, MS 39759
662-324-4090

Mrs. Pamela Morton, Reading Facilitator
Overstreet Elementary School
307 South Jackson Street
Starkville, MS 39759
662-324-4090

Mrs. Patricia Prowell
North Jackson Elementary School
650 James Davis Drive
Jackson, MS 39213
601-206-1891

Dr. Peggy J. Rogers, Assistant Superintendent
Lowndes County Schools
1053 Hwy 45 South
Columbus, MS 39701
662-329-5768