

DO TEACHERS TEACH AS THEY ARE TAUGHT TO TEACH?

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When prospective teachers enter colleges and universities to begin teacher education programs, most of them come prepared with a common sense knowledge of what it means to teach. Some of them have already had experience as teachers or tutors or more indirect teaching experiences as caregivers or volunteers for service organizations. But even more important, all of the prospective teachers have had many years of experience as students in classrooms and as learners outside of classrooms. The influence of past experiences on teacher's instructional behavior is described by some researchers as influential enough to override the effects of teacher education programs and has led to a cliché frequently used to describe what supposedly happens during teacher education: prospective teachers teach as they were taught not as they were taught to teach.

The expectation of prospective teachers is, however, that completion of a teacher education program at colleges or universities will indeed transform them into effective teachers. To accomplish the goal of preparing effective teachers universities and colleges have traditionally separated teacher education into two categories: (a) educational and foundation courses, and (2) field experiences. This practice of separating university coursework from field experiences in schools has contributed to a widely held notion that a similar split exists between theory and practice in teacher education. Theory, the main substantive contingent of methods courses, and practice, the *real* teaching carried out in *real* classrooms are distinct, and are viewed as unrelated to one another. The separation of university coursework from the field experiences may contribute to the many reasons cited (See Kathis & Batz, 1982) for the perceived lack of impact of teacher training.

Without explicit instruction to integrate theory and practice, the argument goes, pre-service teachers are left to their own devices and quite naturally rely on their previous experiences as students to play and carry out instruction.

The observation (Goodlad, 1982) that teachers teach as they were taught, not as they were taught to teach, suggests that despite the benefits of existing research on teacher training, preservice education has little effect on teachers' ultimate performance in schools.

Fuller and Brown (1975) discuss the need for theory building and a conceptualization of the processes of change which occur in teacher preparation. They state that adequate theories describing teacher development have not been available because too little is known about what transpires during teacher education. More than ten years later, Zeichner (in

press) states that numerous studies on teacher education have been conducted; the studies have generally provided little information beyond course descriptions and distributions of credits. None of the studies have contributed to a realistic description of how preservice education influences teaching behavior. In fact, the related literature on the development of teacher perspectives conveys an implicit criticism of preservice education and its impact on teachers' performances (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Fuller & Brown, 1972). The criticisms may be without foundation, however, Zeichner (in press) argues that description of preservice education are needed "to provide information about how knowledge and skills provided in college courses are communicated to prospective teachers and how this information is translated into perspectives (actions and conceptions) by preservice teachers" (p. 11). The impact of formal education courses must be assessed by examining the university experience in conjunction with the practicum experience. In short, the actual conduct of preservice education remains an issue.

Although research related to reading has not directly contributed to a description of the pre-service phase of teachers' formal preparation, instructional research in reading convincingly demonstrates that commercially made materials, particularly the basal reader, significantly influences the quality of reading instruction in American schools (Duffy & McIntyre, 1980; Artley, 1980). No particular sequence of instruction is evident, explicit purposes for instruction are not stated, and strategies for comprehension are not developed.

Shannon (1984) describes elementary teachers' behavior during reading instruction as "the application of commercially made materials" (p. 69). He states that the overreliance on commercial materials is unfortunate for three reasons: "it precludes attention to students' individual needs (Austin & Morrison, 1963; Goodlad, 1970); it stymies attempts at instructional innovation (Chall, 1967; Rosecky, 1978; Singer, 1977); and it predetermines teachers' instructional decisions (Duffy & McIntyre, 1980)" (p. 69). Furthermore, an unintended effect of the overreliance of commercial materials is that teachers and students view the act of reading as merely the teaching and completion of commercially made materials (Shannon, 1984; Fuller & Brown, 1973).

In order to understand how preservice education influences the development of teacher perspectives regarding the use of basal readers for elementary reading instruction, "thick" descriptions of preservice reading education are necessary. Detailed descriptions may yield insights and suggest hypotheses concerning the influence of a university reading methods class on instructional behavior in the elementary classroom. The study proposed here will contribute one such "thick" description of preservice education.

Description of Study

The study will extend the research on teacher education by identifying and describing matches and mismatches between reading methodology presented in a university class and observations of preservice teachers' instructional behavior during a reading practicum. The description will focus on, but not be limited to, the matches between course content and practice teaching regarding the use of basal readers to teach strategies for comprehending text. More specifically, the study

will describe and examine both the development of teacher perspectives (beliefs and actions) regarding basal reader programs as influenced by university course content, and the interactions among preservice teachers, cooperating teachers, university supervisors and the university lecturer.

The study will be guided by one general research question:

To what extent does the content of reading methodology course influence the planning and implementation of a reading lesson?

Of particular concern is the extent to which preservice teachers' instructional decision-making includes a consideration of four issues presented in a reading methodology class: (a) selection of materials, (b) a plan for instruction, (c) stated purpose for instruction, and (d) strategy development.

The investigation is designed to yield a description of what actually happens when preservice teachers begin to learn about and to provide reading instruction in elementary classrooms.

Methodology

Preservice teachers enrolled in one section of an undergraduate reading methods course, "Teaching Reading in the Elementary School", and a related practicum will be asked to volunteer for the study. From the pool of volunteers, four students will be chosen as subjects for case studies based on two criteria: diversity among school placements and diversity of responses to the Conceptions of Reading Propositional Inventory (Duffy & Anderson, 1982).

"Teaching Reading in the Elementary School" is a beginning course in reading methodology. It is intended to be an introduction to reading theory and practice. The course has two major foci: the reading process and the process of teaching reading. To address these major processes the course is organized around five topics: Introduction to Reading, Word Level Comprehension, Text Level Comprehension, The Reader and Classroom Practices. The lecturer will draw upon findings from research areas such as developmental psychology, information processing, schema theory and classroom research. The goal is to integrate research findings with the practical aspects of teaching reading. Readings, lectures, discussions, workshops assignments and exams are directed to this end. The investigator of the study will be the instructor for the course.

The field research will take place over a semester's time (3-4 month period) in order to document any development of change in pre-service teachers' instructional behavior during the practicum period. Although this research will rely heavily on observation and interview, a variety of techniques are proposed. These techniques will provide depth to the data gathered and will serve as a cross check on data and interpretations. Denzin's (1978) notion of "triangulation"—the collection of multiple data sources to cross check the validity of casual propositions and developing hypotheses—serves as both a rationale for identifying various data sources and a method for interpreting information from those sources. Data gathering procedures will include audiotapes of lessons, observations, interviews, document collection, and the completion of several instruments designed to establish: (1) preservice teachers' comprehension of university course content, and (2) preservice teacher behavior before, during, and after the execution of a reading lesson.

The interview questions and records of behavior protocols are derived from areas of concern which relate to the general research question: materials selection, strategy, plan of instruction, and explicit purpose for instruction. Interview responses, behavior protocol and assessment of course content will be compared in order to determine the degree to which beliefs about reading instruction are supported or contradicted by instructional behavior. Additional notes and audiotapes of classroom observations and university lectures will help to supplement and support inferences regarding the influences of university course content on preservice teachers planning and implementation of a reading lesson.

Collection and analysis of data on the match and mismatches between university teaching and practicum behavior may shed light on ways to more adequately prepare preservice teachers to provide instruction for elementary school children.

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