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ABSTRACT

A study tested the usefulness of the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in terms of its accuracy in measuring preservice teachers' change in theoretical orientation to reading as a result of having taken a reading methods course. Subjects, 27 upper division elementary education majors (the experimental group) and 15 upper division students enrolled in an elementary level curriculum course (the control group) took the TORP as pre- and posttests. The reading methods course taken by the experimental group was literature-based and whole language in orientation. Results indicated an increase in the posttest scores in the direction of a skills/whole language orientation, suggesting a movement away from a subskills or phonics perspective on the continuum to either a skills or whole language theoretical orientation. Findings suggest that the reading methods course influenced students' pre-test beliefs about reading instruction as measured by the TORP. (Three tables of data are included; 21 references and the TORP are attached.) (RS)

The Effect of an Introductory Reading Course on Pre-Service Teachers' Theoretical Orientation to the Teaching of Reading

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Running Head: TORP

The Effects of an Introductory Reading Course on Pre-Service Teachers' Theoretical Orientation to the Teaching of Reading

Introduction

It is important that preservice teachers understand the influence that their theoretical orientation to reading instruction has on instructional practice. It affects, to a great extent, students' perceptions of what reading is. In this vein, Weaver (1988) explained: "Children's success at reading reflects their reading strategies; their reading strategies typically reflect their implicit definitions of reading; children's definitions of reading often reflect the instructional approach; and the instructional approach reflects a definition of reading" (p.2). Similarly, Smith (1982) emphasized the importance of theory as it influences interactions.

> What we have in our heads is a theory of what the world is like, a theory that is the basis of all our perceptions and understanding of the world, the root of all learning, the source of all hopes and fears, motives and expectancies, reasoning and creativity. And this theory is all we have. If we can make sense of the world at all, it is by interpreting our interactions with the world in the light of that theory. (p. 54)

A number of studies support the assumption that a teacher's theoretical orientation influences instructional practices in the classroom. Harste and Burke (1977) discussed teachers' theoretical orientation to reading in terms of its effect on the varied decisions teachers make about teaching, namely: (a) the goals teachers set for the classroom, (b) the behaviors teachers perceive as reflecting desirable reading behavior, (c) the procedures, materials, and information teachers use for instructional diagnosis, (d) the weighting teachers give to various diagnostic data, (e) the materials teachers

select and use for instruction in the program, (f) the environment teachers deem to be most conducive to reading growth, and (g) the criteria teachers use to determine growth in reading.

Likewise, Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, and Lloyd (1991) examined the relationship between teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading comprehension and their classroom practices. They collected data using an ethnographic beliefs inventory and made classroom observations. The findings of this study revealed that the beliefs of teachers corresponded to their classroom practices.

Bruinsma (1985) examined the usefulness of the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in measuring change in teachers' theoretical orientation to reading as a result of inservice education. He demonstrated the usefulness of this instrument in assessing teachers' beliefs in a summer workshop format. Similarly, Strickland (1990) compared the philosophies developed in undergraduate methods courses with philosophies influenced by cooperating teachers in the classroom. She found that the TORP, administered at the beginning and end of the semester, was effective in identifying students' pervasive philosophy. Results indicated that while some students were influenced by their university professors, others left with no conscious orientation or philosophy. In addition, she discovered that while the influence of cooperating teachers varied, few students were influenced philosophically by what they observed in the classroom.

On the other hand, research conclusions about the relationship between theoretical orientation and classroom reading practices have been mixed. The nature of the relationship between teachers' beliefs and their teaching practices is not always clear. Duffy (1977) compared teachers espoused

beliefs to teaching reading with their actual classroom behavior. The findings suggested that perhaps teachers' views about the teaching of reading are not always in harmony with research-based models and that teachers' philosophies may be more tangled and eclectic than conjectured. In a more recent study, Duffy (1981) concluded that a teachers' theoretical orientation does not influence reading practices. Likewise, Hoffman and Kugle (1982), using the TORP measure, found a lack of correlation between teachers' theoretical orientation and specific classroom behaviors. They observed:

> It would be easy to conclude that for some teachers there is no strong relationship between teacher beliefs and teacher behaviors. It would be more reasonable based on the findings from the focused interviews, however, to bring to question the notion that we can validly assess beliefs through a paper-and-pencil type task. (p. 6)

Reading methods courses must make explicit the relationship between theory and practice in order to empower students to make informed decisions about instructional practice. Since many schools have adopted a literature-based, whole language approach to reading instruction, it is incumbent upon teacher preparation institutions to include this model as one option and to demonstrate teaching practices reflective of this orientation.

Purpose of this Study

The present study, a partial replication of the DeFord (1985, 1979) studies in a different setting, was undertaken to test the usefulness of the Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP) in terms of its accuracy in measuring preservice teacher's change in theoretical orientation to reading as a result of a having taken a reading methods course. For this investigation, the TORP was administered at the beginning and end of the Spring 1992 semester

to identify students' theoretical orientation to reading instruction and to measure change in theoretical perspective. The investigators hypothesized the following: (a) Null Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in total group pre and posttest total scores on the TORP in the direction of whole language as a result of instruction emphasizing whole language strategies ($p < .05$) and (b) Null Hypothesis 2.: There is no significant difference in pre and posttest mean scores on the TORP subscores of whole language, skills and phonics in the direction of whole language as a result of instruction emphasizing whole language strategies ($p < .05$).

This study dealt with three perspectives regarding the teaching of reading as classified by DeFord (1985): (a) whole language, (b) skills, and (c) phonics. DeFord theorized that most reading programs fall along a continuum of practices (Figure 1), instead of in three discrete categories. She found there were "points of overlap in instructional practices, particularly in areas of proximity to another orientation. That is, the phonics and skills orientations tended to share practices, as did the skills and language orientations, but there was little sharing between phonics and language" (p. 354).

Figure 1

Continuum of Instruction with Corresponding TORP Scores.

Phonics	Skills	Whole Language
(28-65)	(65-110)	(110-140)

The first of these perspectives, whole language, has been described by Goodman and Goodman (1982) who argued that this approach, which builds on students' natural language learning processes, includes the following wholistic strategies:

> In this method there are no pre-reading skills, no formalized reading readiness. Instead, learning is expected to progress from whole to part, from general to specific, from familiar to unfamiliar, from vague to precise, from gross to fine, from highly contextualized to more abstract. Children are expected to read, first familiar meaningful wholes--easily predictable materials that draw on concepts and experiences they already have. (p. 127)

A second perspective, a skills approach, to teaching reading emphasizes the building of sight vocabulary and the pre-teaching of new vocabulary. Words are initially introduced in context with ample opportunity for practice. Instruction on graphophonics is provided and word perception skills are taught in a hierarchical sequence (DeFord, 1985). The skills approach is a part-to-whole, text-to-reader approach. Comprehension is taught as a set of hierarchical, part-to-whole skills (Weaver, 1988). Similarly, Goodman, Watson and Burke (1987) explained:

> Meaning is important to this view but is often organized as a hierarchical set of comprehension skills. Those who support this view think of reading as a set of hierarchical skills and believe that the teaching of language must be simplified in order for children to learn to read. (p. 133)

A third orientation, a phonics approach, focuses on "smaller than word level language units, with gradual movement toward word units and attention to comprehension" (DeFord, 1985, p. 353). Emphasis is on phonemic consistency, decoding isolated letters and letter combinations. "Typically, children are taught not only basic letter/sound correspondences but rules for sounding out

words .... The most extreme advocates of a phonics approach obviously believe that learning to read means learning to pronounce words" (Weaver, 1988, p. 41). The assumption is that meaning will take care of itself once words are decoded, Weaver cautioned.

Methodology

Treatment: This study focused on the effects of an introductory reading course on pre-service teachers' theoretical orientation to the teaching of reading. This course, literature-based and whole language in orientation, was based on the following tenets:

(1) A whole language orientation to reading instruction is more likely to produce effective readers than a skills approach.

(2) Metacognitive strategies contribute to independence in reading.

(3) Strategic reading effects improved comprehension.

(4) The reading writing connection enhances communication.

(5) Integrated instruction, including authentic reading, effects greater gains in comprehension than do other skill/subskill models.

The instructional format used in this course included the following: (a) discussions based on textbook readings and reflection log content; (b) reflection log notations in which students critically reacted to chapter readings and class discussions; (c) collaborative projects designed to facilitate strategic reading, for example, Question-Answer Relationships (QAR) and Know-What to Learn (KWL), an interactive strategy; (d) video presentations on emergent literacy, big books, and literature-based curricula; (e) journal article critiques; (f) micro-teaching, a team effort, using a literature-based

approach to reading instruction; (g) textbook chapter readings; and (h) essay examinations.

Instrument: DeFord (1979, 1985) designed an instrument, Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP), to identify teachers' theoretical orientation to reading instruction in terms of three models: (a) a phonics orientation that emphasized smaller than word level language units, decoding, (b) a skills approach in which reading means mastering a set of hierarchical skills frequently taught in isolation and (c) a holistic model of teaching reading that reflects a transactional, psycholinguistic view of reading which emphasizes simultaneous processing of graphophonic, semantic and syntactic cues.

The TORP is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring one's theoretical orientation to reading instruction as was demonstrated through descriptive data analysis, factor analysis and discriminant analysis (DeFord 1979, 1985). The results of the DeFord study suggested that the TORP consistently differentiates teachers according to their theoretical orientation on a continuum of phonics, skills, and whole language.

The TORP consists of 28 items that focus on beliefs and practices related to reading instruction as determined by DeFord (1979, 1985). Responses to each question were recorded on a Likert Scale that gave a choice of five responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A total score, based on the 28 questions, reflects a student's theoretical orientation to reading. Scores ranging from 28-65 reflect a phonics approach, 65-110 a skills approach, and 110-140 a whole language approach. The time required for the administration of the TORP is about 20-30 minutes.

Procedures

Sample: The subjects in this study were 42 undergraduate elementary education majors enrolled in a university in the southeastern section of the United States. Prior studies using the TORP were conducted in the following settings: (a) with student teachers enrolled in a four-year public university in Pennsylvania (Strickland, 1990), (b) during a nine-day summer workshop in Edmonton, Alberta (Bruinsma, 1985), (c) with inservice teachers in Ohio (DeFord, 1985), and (d) in an infant school in England (Miller, 1990). The use of the TORP with special populations, such as with preservice teachers, appears to be a legitimate area to explore.

The participants in the experimental group were 27 upper division elementary education majors enrolled in a reading methods course during the spring semester of 1992. The control group consisted of 15 upper division students enrolled in an elementary level curriculum course. Since there was only one male in the group, this student was deleted from the group. The TORP was administered to these groups as a pre-test at the beginning of the semester and as a post-test at the end.

Scoring: The scoring procedures that were used in this study were based on the techniques developed by DeFord (1979, 1985). A Likert scale, ranging from one to five points, was used to register agreement or disagreement to 28 statements regarding reading instruction. The items associated with a phonics approach were 1, 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 20, 21, and 22. Those associated with a skills approach were 4, 8, 11, 13, 14, 16, 19, 24, 25, and 26. Items reflecting a whole language orientation were 5, 7, 15, 17, 18, 23, 26, and 27. Phonics and skills items were scored as they appeared on the TORP: strongly agree = 1, agree = 2, neutral = 3, disagree = 4, and disagree = 5 (Appendix

recoded as follows: strongly agree = 5 points, agree = 4, neutral = 3, disagree = 2, and strongly disagree = 1. The total scores represented a continuum ranging from 28-65 (phonics), 65-110 (skills), and 110-140 (whole language).

A total score for the TORP's 28 items was obtained for the pre-test and the post-test. Additionally, subtest scores in phonics, skills, and whole language were calculated. A two groups (experimental and control), two observations, pretest-posttest design was employed. To determine differences in total group scores a *t* test was calculated. Subgroup mean scores in pre and posttests (whole language, skills, and phonics) were compared.

Results and Discussion

The comparison of total TORP scores of experimental and control groups, using a *t* test calculation on the pre and posttest scores, revealed a significant difference at the $t(40) = 3.68$, $p < .001$ level favoring the experimental group (Table 1). A comparison of the total test mean scores revealed an increase in the post-test scores in the direction of a skills/whole language orientation, suggesting a movement from a subskills or phonics perspective on the continuum to either a skills or whole language theoretical orientation. Thus the findings of this study suggest that this methods course in reading influenced students' pretest beliefs about reading instruction as measured by the TORP.

Insert Table 1 about here.

Similarly, pre and posttest mean subscores (whole language, skills, and phonics) revealed the following: (a) the whole language pretest mean subscore was 57 with a posttest mean score of 83; (b) the skills pretest mean subscore was 59.4 with a posttest mean subscore of 69.2 and (c) the phonics pretest mean subscore was 51.1 with a posttest mean subscore of 78.6 (Table 2). These indicate movement on the DeFord continuum (Figure 1) in the direction of skills/whole language.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Individual scores for each of the 42 participants in the study are given in Table 3 as well as changes in orientation for both experimental and control groups.. The 28 items of the TORP were summed for each of the 27 subjects in the experimental group and 15 in the control group. In viewing the individual scores, it is obvious that many of these scores do not fall in the whole language section of the DeFord continuum (Figure 1); however, there is a definite move in the skills/whole language direction. On the pretest, twenty-one students in the experimental group registered a phonics/subskill orientation; however, only seven retained a phonics perspective on the posttest, suggesting a distinct change in orientation to a skills/whole language philosophy (Table 3). Ten students moved from a phonics to a skills (eclectic) perspective, four moved from a phonics to a whole language orientation, six retained a skills framework, and seven maintained a phonics orientation. Only three students regressed on the continuum. The control

group mean scores remained relatively unchanged with a pretest mean score of 55.87 and a posttest mean score of 57.67 (Table 1).

Insert Table 3 about here.

In conclusion, as part of a teacher change effort in a preservice reading course designed to stress reflective thinking, we formulated reading instruction that was designed to make students aware of prevailing models of teaching reading and prepared them for instructional decision making. To measure the degree of change in beliefs about reading instruction, pre and post TORP measures were administered and analyzed. From these results, we concluded that this study again demonstrated: (a) the usefulness of the TORP in identifying pre-service teacher's theoretical orientation to reading instruction and (b) its effectiveness in measuring change in preservice teachers' theoretical orientation to reading instruction. We concur with DeFord (1985) that the chief value of the TORP is in "helping researchers and teachers alike examine the assumptions they hold, make their research and instruction as consistent and effective as possible, and develop comprehensive models of reading and instruction based upon clearly defined theoretical positions" (p.365).

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Table 1

Total Pre and Posttest Results on the TORP

TORP Total Test	Mean	SD	t
Total Pretest Experimental	55.41	11.71	
Total Posttest Experimental	79.41	20.45	3.68 *
Total Pretest Control	55.87	9.80	
Total Posttest Control	57.67	9.17	

* p = < .001, 2-Tailed Probability, df = 40.

Table 2

Total Pre and Posttest Subscore Results on the TORP

TORP Subscores	No. of TORP Items	Mean Experimental	Mean Control
Phonics pretest	10	51.1	36.88
Phonics posttest	10	78.6	33.75
Skills pretest	10	59.4	28.20
Skills posttest	10	69.2	29.40
Whole language pretest	8	57.0	26.20
Whole language posttest	8	83.0	30.20

Table 3

Pretest and posttest total scores on the TORP.

Subject	Pretest	TO*	Posttest	TO	Difference
Experimental Group: N = 27					
1	64	S	84	S	20
2	58	P	65	S	7
3	45	P	60	P	15
4	52	P	64	P	12
5	42	P	63	P	21
6	70	S	101	S	31
7	40	P	57	P	17
8	56	P	46	P	-10
9	43	P	111	WL	68
10	51	P	75	S	24
11	63	P	95	S	32
12	51	P	58	P	7
13	62	P	65	S	3
14	57	P	80	S	23
15	38	P	87	S	49
16	47	P	110	WL	63
17	66	S	73	S	7
18	78	S	81	S	3
19	59	P	52	P	-7
20	78	S	74	S	-4
21	62	P	105	S	43
22	52	P	115	WL	63
23	51	P	70	S	19
24	38	P	73	S	35
25	55	P	119	WL	64
26	75	S	93	S	18
27	43	P	68	S	25
Control Group: N = 15					
28	54	P	52	P	-2
29	32	P	42	P	10
30	65	S	68	S	3
31	70	S	68	S	-2
32	45	P	73	S	28
33	61	P	51	P	-10
34	48	P	42	P	-6
35	59	P	53	P	-6
36	71	S	65	S	-6
37	58	P	66	S	8
38	56	P	57	P	1
39	58	P	59	P	1
40	53	P	57	P	4
41	57	P	54	P	-3
42	51	P	58	P	7

* TO = Theoretical Orientation: Phonics (P) = 28 - 65, Skills (S) = 65 - 110, Whole Language (WL) = 110 - 140.

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION TO THE TEACHING OF READING PROFILE (DEFORD, 1985)

Appendix A

plore further your own views of reading and reading instruction, respond to the following questionnaire; you might also use it during the interviews suggested above. For each question, circle the one best answer that reflects the strength of your agreement or disagreement: SA means "strongly agree," while SD means "strongly disagree." This questionnaire is the DeFord Theoretical Orientation to Reading Profile (TORP), included and discussed in DeFord 1985:

1. A child needs to be able to verbalize the rules of phonics in order to assure proficiency in processing new words. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
2. An increase in reading errors is usually related to a decrease in comprehension. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
3. Dividing words into syllables according to rules is a helpful instructional practice for reading new words. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
4. Fluency and expression are necessary components of reading that indicate good comprehension. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
5. Materials for early reading should be written in natural language without concern for short, simple words and sentences. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
6. When children do not know a word, they should be instructed to sound out its parts. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
7. It is a good practice to allow children to edit what is written into their own dialect when learning to read. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
8. The use of a glossary or dictionary is necessary in determining the meaning and pronunciation of new words. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
9. Reversals (e.g., saying "saw" for "was") are significant problems in the teaching of reading. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
10. It is a good practice to correct a child as soon as an oral reading mistake is made. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
11. It is important for a word to be repeated a number of times after it has been introduced to insure that it will become a part of sight vocabulary. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
12. Paying close attention to punctuation marks is necessary to understanding story content. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
13. It is a sign of an ineffective reader when words and phrases are repeated. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
14. Being able to label words according to grammatical function (nouns, etc.) is useful in proficient reading. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
15. When coming to a word that's unknown, the reader should be encouraged to guess upon meaning and go on. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
16. Young readers need to be introduced to the root form of words (run, long) before they are asked to read inflected forms (running, longest). — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
17. It is not necessary for a child to know the letters of the alphabet in order to learn to read. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
18. Flashcard drills with sightwords is an unnecessary form of practice in reading instruction. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
19. Ability to use accent patterns in multisyllable words (pho' to graph, pho to' gra phy, and pho to gra' phic) should be developed as part of reading instruction. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
20. Controlling text through consistent spelling patterns (The fat cat ran back. The fat cat sat on a hat) is a means by which children can best learn to read. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
21. Formal instruction in reading is necessary to insure the adequate development of all the skills used in reading. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
22. Phonic analysis is the most important form of analysis used when meeting new words. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
23. Children's initial encounters with print should focus on meaning, not upon exact graphic representation. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
24. Word shapes (word configuration) should be taught in reading to aid in word recognition. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
25. It is important to teach skills in relation to other skills. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
26. If a child says "house" for the written word "home," the response should be left uncorrected. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
27. It is not necessary to introduce new words before they appear in the reading text. — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)
28. Some problems in reading are caused by readers dropping the inflectional endings from words (e.g., jumps, *jumped*) — 1 2 3 4 5 (SA … SD)