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Abstract: Whilst early childhood educators are well aware of the importance of meeting the needs of individual children when teaching 'struggling readers', finding the time for frequent one-on-one support is difficult. Studies have established that with a well developed and structured tutoring programme, as well as high quality training and supervision, volunteers can be used to provide tutoring in a one-on-one early intervention reading programme. The current study suggests that there is an opportunity for preservice teachers to gain valuable information to increase their knowledge of the reading process, while providing effective support to schools as trained tutors. The small-scale exploratory study examines the skills and knowledge gained by preservice teachers while employed as trained tutors in an early intervention reading programme.

Introduction

Research suggests that the quality of teaching is an important factor influencing student achievement. Darling-Hammond (2000) concluded that student achievement was more strongly related to the quality of teaching and teacher education than class sizes or overall spending levels, while Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) claimed that quality classroom instruction in the first years of school was the single best weapon against reading failure. The Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2005, p54) asserted that 'effective schooling for all children is crucially dependent on the provision of quality teaching by competent teachers, especially in reading instruction' and recommended that foundation skills for literacy development of children be taught explicitly, systematically, early and well. However, while educators agree on the importance of quality classroom instruction, some children still fail to make satisfactory progress in reading and require intervention to develop emergent literacy knowledge. Westwood (2001) claimed approximately 16% of Australian children have difficulties learning to read. Wasik and Slavin (1993) reviewed five reading programmes and demonstrated that intervention using a one-on-one tutoring model produced substantial positive results for children with reading difficulties. A metaanalysis conducted by Elbaum, Vaughn, Hughes and Moody (2000) found that well designed and reliably implemented one-on-one interventions can significantly improve reading outcomes for struggling readers.

Whilst early childhood educators are well aware of the importance of meeting the needs of individual children, finding the time for frequent one-on-one support is difficult. Traditionally parents have assisted with early reading programmes. However fewer parents now have the time to do so. Wasik (1998) suggested that volunteers could be trained to act as tutors, but stressed the

importance of a well developed and structured programme, with high quality training and supervision. More recently, Pullen, Lane and Monaghan (2004) described a volunteer-implemented short term tutoring model designed to help struggling early readers. The tutors who implemented the reading intervention were mostly university education students with limited field experience.

This paper examines the skills and knowledge gained by preservice teachers while employed as trained tutors in an early intervention reading programme. A small-scale exploratory study, using a single observer, was designed and executed to examine the literacy teaching practices used by the tutors as they implemented the intervention. The current study suggests that there is an opportunity for preservice teachers to gain valuable information to increase their knowledge of the reading process, while providing effective support to schools as trained tutors.

Beginning Teachers & Teaching Literacy

Teacher education, especially the preparedness of beginning teachers to teach literacy, has been the subject of several recent inquiries. The Australian National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (DEST, 2005) reported the literacy competency of preservice teachers as an issue. These students needed help to develop their foundational literacy skills and also needed explicit teaching about phonemic awareness, phonics and the alphabetic principle. The committee recommended that the key objective of primary teacher education courses be to prepare preservice teachers to teach reading, with a focus on contemporary understandings of evidence-based findings and an integrated approach to the teaching of reading. It recommended increasing the time spent on reading instruction, improving the content of teacher preparation courses and school practice arrangements.

Louden and Rohl (2006) reported that the most serious concerns expressed by beginning teachers related to the relevance of literacy teaching knowledge during their preservice education and to a lesser extent the need for more time on practicum in schools before graduating. Beginning teachers were concerned about their specific literacy teaching knowledge in areas such as spelling, grammar and phonics, with many unsatisfied with the balance between theory and practice. Likewise, the findings by the House of Representative Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, 'Top of the Class' (HRSCE&VT, 2007), reported that many preservice teachers and recent graduates expressed concern about the weakness of the link between the practicum and the theoretical components of the university course. Botzakis and Malloy (2006) reported that Australian respondents in an international poll recommended that links between schools and universities be strengthened so that student teachers have ample opportunities in schools to work under the mentorship of classroom teachers as they practice small-group and whole-class instruction. The number of field work days that preservice teachers must complete in a school setting varies between tertiary institutions as well as between undergraduate and post graduate programmes. Usually, practicing teachers mentor preservice teachers in a school based practicum, within a single class group, for approximately ten weeks. While gaining valuable experience across teaching areas many beginning primary school teachers have little experience in teaching reading. Acting as a tutor in the reading programme, offers an opportunity to gain valuable information to increase their knowledge of the reading process.

The Intervention

The intervention programme, described by Pullen et al (2004), provided tutoring lessons over the course of 8 weeks. The authors of the original study reported that the intervention produced significant improvement in the children's early reading skills. Pre-test and post-test

measures of concepts about print , phonological awareness and sight word recognition in the current study cohort demonstrated that growth in reading skills was attained and the intervention was positive. The cost effectiveness and overall results of the study are discussed in Dawkins, Ritz and Louden (2009).

Each tutor worked with children once per week and implemented the intervention as per session guide (Figure 1). Throughout the study the intervention group continued to participate in classroom reading instructions and activities and the intervention group received tutoring as extra instruction. A reading specialist was responsible for recruiting, training and supervising the volunteer tutors.

Session Guide (Pullen et al, 2004)

Step 1: Gaining Fluency
Select and read 1 or 2 familiar books (5-7)
Coach student throughout books as needed.
Record observations.

Step 2: Measuring progress
Present book from previous session.
Take running record while child reads (2-3 minutes).
Provide feedback regarding self corrections you observed.
Briefly discuss story.

Step 3: Reading a New Book
Introduce new book (1 minute).
Coach student through new book (4-6 minutes).
Discuss story (1 minute).
Record strategies used.

Figure 1 Session Guide for Intervention.

Tutor Recruitment and Training

Preservice teachers, enrolled at a local university, responded to a request for volunteer tutors. The volunteers were at various stages of their teacher training, ranging from 1st year students with minimal field experience to 4th year students, who had recently completed their final practicum and were about to graduate. A pre-intervention survey looked at tutors' expectations and experience. It found that volunteers expected to improve their teaching practice by taking part in the programme. The 1st year preservice teachers described their knowledge and experience of teaching reading as minimal. They had only participated in a brief observational school placement. Even though the 2nd and 3rd year preservice teachers had some knowledge of the concepts of literacy acquisition and the reading process, all three responded that they had limited experience teaching early reading skills. Surprisingly, only one of three tutors who had completed their studies described her knowledge and experience of teaching reading as satisfactory. The other tutors, both primary trained and awaiting interviews before graduation, felt unprepared to teach early reading skills. Another tutor, a 4thyear early childhood preservice teacher yet to complete her final practicum, had a good understanding of the reading process and concepts that needed to be taught but limited experience in the classroom.

Tutors were trained to have a basic understanding of the reading process and teach early reading skills. As recommended by Pressley (2000) tutors were instructed to model and encourage:

- decoding skills

- vocabulary instruction, involving the children in learning word meanings, as well as relating words to contexts and other known words.
- active comprehension strategies, and
- students to monitor their comprehension, noting explicitly whether decoded words and the text itself makes sense.

The tutors received two hours of small-group training and then ongoing individual training and support throughout the programme. As the success of the intervention relied on the expertise of the tutors and their ability to faithfully implement the intervention as prescribed, each element of the tutoring model, along with the teaching of related early reading skills, was explicitly modelled and practised. Each lesson followed the same three-step structure. After the first session, during which the student was introduced to an appropriate levelled Reading Recovery book, the tutoring session was structured as follows.

Step 1: Gaining Fluency (5-7 minutes). The child, with coaching from the tutor, read a text, selected in a previous lesson, which the student was able to read with between 90% and 98% accuracy. To promote fluency the student read the same text for the first portion of each session until fluency was achieved.

Step 2: Measuring Progress (3-4 minutes). During each lesson the tutor measured the child's progress by taking a running record on the new book that was introduced and read during the previous lesson. Tutors recorded the strategies they noticed the students using or failing to use during the lesson. The tutor then used the information gained to select the appropriate book level to be introduced in the current session.

Step 3: Reading a New Book (5-7 minutes). During each session, the student read a new and challenging book. The book was introduced by the tutor. The student then read the new book with guidance and coaching from the tutor. The new book read in this part of the tutoring session became the familiar book to be read in the next session during Step 2.

Book orientation skills were modelled and the importance and relevance of orientating a reader with the text discussed. Tutors were instructed to orientate new texts by discussing the title and cover illustrations, take a picture walk through the book and draw attention to repetitive language, rhyme and significant words. They were taught to encourage the student to make predictions and to discuss personally relevant concepts. Tutors were instructed to explicitly teach where to start reading and directionality.

Tutors were also trained to take a running record to determine reading accuracy and select the appropriate book level that should be introduced in the current lesson. Tutors were not expected to use the record to provide information about reading behaviour. Rather, they were asked to note strategies they noticed the students using or failing to use during the session. The reading specialist was present throughout the tutoring sessions to observe the tutors while they were working with the children and provide immediate advice and support.

Tutor Knowledge and Teaching Practices

Reliability

The tutors' reliability in adhering to session protocol was measured by direct observations of instruction using a Treatment Fidelity Checklist designed by the authors of the tutoring model (Pullen et al, 2004). The reading specialist monitored each tutor at least twice during the programme (10%). Tutors used the tutoring session guide to remind them of the steps of the lesson and the critical components of each step. The tutors generally implemented the intervention as intended. Fidelity for the intervention sessions, based on the percentage of sessions conducted according to protocol, was 0.94.

Undertaking a running record to calculate accuracy in oral reading proved to be difficult for some tutors at first, but was quickly mastered. Book orientation was successfully implemented by all but two tutors from the first session onwards. These two tutors' attempts at orientation

were cursory, with little more than the book cover considered. However, this improved after modelling of this step by other tutors and the reading specialist. All tutors were confident using simple prompts early in the programme.

The support of the reading specialist was very important. Tutors received ongoing training and feedback, with the reading specialist suggesting strategies and techniques the volunteers needed to implement. As the programme progressed and the tutors became familiar with the children and their needs, other literacy teaching practices were introduced and developed. These practices were usually suggested by the reading specialist but those tutors about to graduate, were encouraged to assess the needs of the children and to plan and implement literacy teaching practices independently.

Literacy Teaching Practices

The reading specialist also examined the literacy teaching practices used by the tutors as they implemented the intervention. The Classroom Literacy Observation Schedule (CLOS), designed by Louden and Rohl (2003) to register teaching practices identified as contributing to effective early years' literacy teaching, was used to identify the literacy teaching practices of the tutors. Louden & Rohl included thirty three literacy teaching practices grouped into the six dimensions of participation, knowledge, orchestration, support, differentiation and respect in their schedule. Some dimensions focussed directly on teacher behaviour while others focussed more on children's behaviour, which reflect teacher effectiveness in controlling this behaviour. Within each dimension five to seven indicators relate to the literacy teaching practices. Key findings from a range of studies were synthesized to form each dimension and indicator of teaching practice. The validity of the constructs in the six CLOS teaching practices was established using confirmatory factor analysis. The CLOS has been shown empirically to be appropriate for classroom observation of teacher's pedagogical practices (Louden et al, 2005).

During the observation phase of the study the reading specialist, acting as a non-participant observer, collected a running narrative record of each tutor implementing the intervention on two occasions. The narrative for each episode was later scored (by the reading specialist) for the presence or absence of teaching practices included in the CLOS. Scoring was divided by dimension and focussed on the presence or absence of teaching practices in that dimension. The same narrative was scored again under another dimension, focussing on the presence or absence of teaching practices in that dimension. The scorer allocated one point for each of the teaching practices considered to be present in a particular episode. The indicators for each teaching practice are explicitly defined in the CLOS and adherence to the operational definitions of each of the teaching practices ensured the reliability of scoring. For example, for the teaching practice of *attention*, in the participation dimension, to be scored as present the scorer must be satisfied that the children were focused on literacy learning. Similarly, for the teaching practice of *metalanguage*, in the knowledge dimension, to be considered present the tutor must provide children with language for talking about and exemplifying literacy concepts.

The number of episodes was 18 across 9 tutors. Scoring was completed for all of the 25 CLOS items across each of the episodes. The schedule allows partial credit ratings for each of the six dimensions, whereby only some of the teaching practices in a particular dimension may be scored as present. Table 1 shows the literacy teaching practices demonstrated by the tutors, as observed by the reading specialist on two occasions. The schedule, as designed by the original authors, was modified to omit the teaching practices which were not applicable in this setting.

We can see in Table 1 that all nine tutors performed well in the *participation* dimension with children focussed and engaged in literacy learning. We know that active participation is vital for learning and that an effective teacher motivates and engages a student in learning activities. Wilkinson and Sillman (2000) recommend that reading lessons should be designed to motivate students to read, and to provide them with opportunities to develop their literacy skills,

knowledge, and social competencies. Louden et al (2005), considered the teaching practice described as pleasure to be the critical factor in the *participation* dimension. Six of the nine tutors demonstrated this practice, while all tutors demonstrated warmth and rapport, from the *respect* dimension, which are closely linked to pleasure and relate to the social context of teaching and learning. Tutors welcomed students and engaged them in conversation about the day's events before beginning the intervention. Tutors had the respect of children and were confident in handling occasional off task behaviour.

Classroom Literacy Observation Schedule (Practice Axis) (Louden & Rohl, 2003)			**✓ Teaching practice observed**								
			University Year								
Dimensions	**Teaching Practices**	**Indicators**	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	1	1
			Tutor 1	Tutor 2	Tutor 3	Tutor 4	Tutor 5	Tutor 6	Tutor 7	Tutor 8	Tutor 9
Participation	Attention	Children focused on literacy learning.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Engagement	Children are deeply absorbed in the literacy task.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Stimulation	The tutor motivates interest in literacy tasks, concepts and learning.	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
	Pleasure	The tutor creates an enthusiastic and energetic literacy classroom.	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓
	Consistency	Strong literacy routines are recognized and understood by the children.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Knowledge	Purpose	Children's responses indicate tacit or explicit understanding of the purpose of the literacy task.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Substance	The literacy task leads to substantial literacy engagement, not busy work.	✓	✓		✓		✓			
	Explanations	Explanations of literacy concepts and skills are clear and at an appropriate level.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
	Modelling	Demonstrations of literacy task include metacognitive explanations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Metalanguage	Children are provided with language for talking about and exemplifying literacy concepts.	✓								
Orchestration	Structure	The environment is predictable and orderly.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Flexibility	The tutor responds to learning opportunities that arise in the flow of literacy lessons.	✓	✓							
	Pace	The tutor provides strong forward momentum in literacy lessons.	✓	✓		✓					
Support	Assessment	The tutor uses fine-grained knowledge of children's literacy performance in planning and teaching.	✓	✓							
	Scaffolding	The tutor extends children's literacy learning through modelling modifying and correcting.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Feedback	The tutor gives timely, focused and explicit literacy feedback to children.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Responsiveness	The tutor shares and builds on children's literacy contributions.	✓	✓				✓			
	Explicitness word level	The tutor directs children's attention to explicit word and sound strategies.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Explicitness text level	The tutor makes explicit specific attributes of the text.	✓	✓							
	Persistence	The tutor provides many opportunities to practise and master new literacy learning.	✓	✓		✓					
Differentiation	Challenge	The tutor extends and promotes higher order thinking in literacy learning.	✓								
	Individualisation	Differentiated literacy instruction recognises individual differences.	✓	✓							
	Connections	Connections are made between class and community literacy-related knowledge.	✓	✓		✓		✓			
Respect	Warmth	Welcoming, positive and inviting classroom is	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

		focused on literacy learning.									
	Rapport	Relationships with the children support tactful literacy interventions.	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔	✔

Table 1: Literacy Teaching Practices Employed by Tutors

The five teaching practices identified within the *knowledge* dimension are related to understanding of the processes of literacy learning and how to employ this knowledge to teach literacy. All tutors were observed modelling some aspect of a literacy task and advising the student of the purpose of the task, however only four tutors were seen to engage their students in substantial learning in all steps of the intervention. These tutors also offered clear explanations of literacy concepts. Tutor 1 was the only tutor to use metalinguistic terms in her explanations and modelling of concepts and skills.

Effective literacy teachers use their knowledge to *support* literacy learning at an individual level. Only Tutors 1 and 2 independently tailored their teaching when coaching students. All tutors were observed to give feedback and explicit instruction at word level in Steps 1 and 3 of the intervention. Tutors frequently demonstrated affirming feedback, but less often demonstrated modifying or corrective feedback. All tutors taught strategies to decode words although explicitness at the text level was observed in only Tutors 1 and 2. Scaffolding, to increase confidence when reading a new book, was demonstrated by all tutors in Step 3. Persistent encouragement to master concepts and provide opportunities to do so was demonstrated by some tutors.

Louden et al (2005), found that while there was little variation in the activities employed by teachers, more-effective teachers used a much wider variety of practices across the six dimensions of literacy teaching, while less-effective teachers used a limited number of practices. This is apparent in Table 1 with Tutors 1 and 2, both 4th year preservice teachers, demonstrating a wide range of teaching practices across the six dimensions of literacy teaching and using their knowledge of student's literacy performance to individualise their teaching. The other tutors demonstrated teaching practices from all dimensions but performed best in dimensions that relied more on interpersonal skills such as participation and respect, rather than deep knowledge of literacy concepts and skills. Tutors 1 and 2 engaged their students in substantial learning and demonstrated flexibility within the intervention structure by responding to students' questions as an unplanned teaching opportunity. Tutor 1 also used this knowledge to challenge students to extend their learning. These teaching practices were not observed in other tutors who showed little differentiation between students.

Learning by Doing

It is important for preservice teachers to develop a wide range of literacy teaching practices especially those that rely on deep knowledge of literacy concepts and skills to become a more effective teacher. Children need to learn a variety of skills and strategies to become proficient readers and the teacher must explicitly teach and model how effective readers use these skills to create and understand meaning. The National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (DEST, 2005) suggested that preservice teachers needed help to develop their foundational literacy skills and recommended a strong link between the practicum and the theoretical components of the university course to underscore the relevance of literacy teaching knowledge.

The literacy teaching practices demonstrated by the preservice teachers provided a valuable insight into the outcomes achieved by education students in the area of teaching early reading skills. All preservice teachers demonstrated those practices which employed the social aspects of literacy teaching such as engagement, rapport and warmth, and reflect the genuine enthusiasm of the preservice teachers to teach early reading skills. Such practices are especially important when children are struggling with reading and easily discouraged. As might be expected, those teaching practices which rely on considerable understanding of literacy concepts and skills, such

as those in the knowledge, support and differentiation dimensions, were not demonstrated by preservice teachers in their 1st and 2nd year of teacher training. However these teaching practices were also absent among some 4th year preservice teachers. While generally performing well in the knowledge dimension, apart from the lack of metalanguage used, some 4th year preservice teachers did not appear to use their knowledge to support literacy learning at an individual level and differentiate the literacy instruction needs of the individual. Hands on experience in teaching early reading skills helps to develop the expertise necessary to support literacy learning. Participation in the tutoring programme provided valuable experience in teaching early reading skills and allowed preservice teachers to work under the mentorship of a reading specialist as they engaged in one-on-one reading instruction. The reading specialist provided ongoing training and feedback to increase their knowledge of literacy concepts and skills, and develop and extend their range of literacy teaching practices. Tutors experienced first hand the complexities of teaching reading and the need for an integrated approach, while increasing their understanding of evidence-based findings on reading instruction.

Limitations

This was a small-scale exploratory study and has several limitations. The number of episodes scored for each tutor was small (2) and with a single, although different, student in each episode. A single observer was used to record the running narrative record and score the narrative for teaching practices employed by the tutors. Nevertheless, the authors are confident that the 2 episodes captured the range of teaching practices used by the tutors and the observations are valid and reliable.

While pre-test and post-test measures of reading skills demonstrated the intervention was positive, a follow up of those students involved in the programme would explore the longer term impact of the intervention.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A pre intervention survey found that the primary motivation for preservice teachers to volunteer as tutors was to gain practical experience in teaching reading. When responding to a post intervention questionnaire, which rated the success of the programme, tutors agreed they were more confident in teaching early reading skills and had gained a greater understanding of the reading process by participating in the programme. The reading programme afforded the volunteers the opportunity to gain valuable information to increase their knowledge of the reading process and to exercise knowledge and skills that they had acquired and share these with the reading specialist and other volunteers. Formal interviews with tutors would provide more detailed information about the particular knowledge and skills they believed they had acquired.

The report on the inquiry into teacher education, Top of the Class (HRSCE&VT, 2007) recommended that to ensure that the practicum is linked to theory, school staff must be more involved in the design of the curriculum around practicum. It also suggested that schools would be more inclined to welcome practicum students if they were to benefit from doing so. An arrangement with teacher training institutions for students to obtain some acknowledgment for commitment to service learning projects, such as this intervention programme would prove beneficial for all participants.

The findings of this study suggest the partnership between preservice teachers and schools in early intervention reading programmes, offers an ideal opportunity to restore the balance between theory and practice and affords preservice teachers a comprehensive experience in teaching early reading skills while providing effective support as trained tutors. Furthermore, this tutor structure could also be used for students at risk in mathematics. Those students identified as

struggling, by assessments such as The Early Years Numeracy Diagnostic Assessment, could take part in an intervention designed to assist in the diagnosed area of weakness. This would provide preservice teachers with valuable experience in teaching mathematics concepts and skills.

In conclusion, we believe the study encourages and supports the participation of preservice teachers in authentic teaching and learning opportunities which together with undergraduate coursework will help equip preservice teachers to be effective teachers.

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