

TEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS’ VOICES

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Abstract

It is important to support teachers to adapt and apply effective literacy instruction strategies. Teachers may receive support from many sources, such as principals, literacy coaches, parents and colleagues. Perhaps most importantly, the teaching of literacy requires the support of the principal, literacy coach, and others who can collaborate with the classroom teacher to implement effective literacy instruction and strategies. All of these supports play a role in effectively achieving high literacy levels among students. This is a qualitative study, which used a phenomenological approach to data collection. The researcher focused on capturing the professional lived experiences of ten 2nd grade teachers located in 3 mid-sized city school districts in the Midwest as they described their approaches to literacy teaching, their thinking as they make their literacy practice choices, and professional colleagues who influenced the choices they made. Direct interviews were used to discover: 1) the strategies and instructional practices for the teaching of literacy that the teachers found to be effective and 2) the support and influence that the other adults in their teaching environment had on the teachers with the adoption and implementation of literacy teaching strategies.

Background

This phenomenological study utilized a qualitative research methodology to understand and investigate the teachers' understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them in elementary schools. This methodology was selected because the researcher was interested in capturing deeper information about teachers' understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies, why they made decisions to use the literacy strategies they chose. This allowed the researcher to describe and understand the individual experiences of teachers (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Problem Statement

Most of the recommendations from research on the use of effective literacy instructional strategies lack the teachers' "voices", perspectives, understandings, and their personal attributes (Wildman, Magliaro, Niles & Niles, 1992).

Minimal research attention has been directed towards qualitative research that directly interviews teachers about their understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies and why they decide to use them in elementary schools (Creswell, 2014; Hightower, Delgado, Lloyd, Wittenstein, Sellers & Swanson, 2011).

Therefore, this study was designed to address that gap in our understanding through in-depth qualitative inquiry using a direct interview method for interviewing to explore teachers' understanding and thinking about effective literacy instruction strategies they have been chosen to use and how their choices may have been influenced by those responsible for the professional support of teachers (Creswell, 2014; Opdenakker, 2006; Kvale, 1983).

Research Method& Design

This is a qualitative study, which used a phenomenological approach to data collection (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Validity, Credibility, and Dependability

The researcher used several strategies to establish validity, credibility, and dependability, such as peer debriefing, thick and rich description, and code-recode (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Chilisa& Preece, 2005; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

- Peer debriefing was reached by discussion between Researcher 1 and Researcher 2 about the research process to analyze findings, and draw conclusions. Peer debriefing was an effective way to provide the researcher a sounding board to test her developing ideas, views, perceptions, or interpretations and to recognize her own biases (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Creswell & Miller, 2000).
- Thick and rich description was achieved by presenting the participants' voices and perspectives with each emergent theme (Creswell & Miller, 2000).
- Code-recode strategy was achieved by researcher coded the same data twice by giving at least one or two weeks' period between each coding to compare the results from the two coding and see if the results were the same or different (Chilisa& Preece, 2005).

Results

Findings were discussed as four themes that correspond with the four major questions that emerged from the data.

Terms Used In Results Table

The results were organized first by theme, second by core idea, an idea that was akin to a sub-theme, and lastly by emergent ideas, the significant or particular points found within the core ideas (Saldana, 2016).

- In this study of 10 participants, emergent ideas that occurred for just one participant were labeled Rare.
- Emergent ideas that occurred for two to four participants were labeled Limited.
- Emergent ideas that occurred for five to eight participants were labeled Majority.
- If an emergent idea occurred for nine to ten participants, it was labeled Super Majority.
- See the Summary of Results Table.

Conclusion

- A key message from effective and veteran teachers' voices to other teachers, especially new teachers, is that adopting and implementing effective literacy instruction strategies, will allow them to benefit from several support resources and will create effective factors for literacy learning that will lead to improvement for their second-grade students.
- Addressing the support from parents can begin when school stakeholders, especially the principals and teachers, understand and emphasize that the overall school and home environments greatly influence academic and behavior successes.
- Teamwork in school plays a significant role in enhancing progress in literacy learning for students' achievement.
- It is important to hear from the veteran teachers' perspectives and call attention to the idea that having a common vision is a probable way of overcoming issues that confront schools where the development of effective teaching practice is concerned.

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N	Theme	N	Core Idea	N	Emergent Idea	N	Frequency
1	Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies Question1: Which do you believe are the most effective literacy instructional strategies? And Why?	A	Identifying Effective Literacy Instruction Strategies	1	Different Strategies for Building Vocabulary, Increased Fluency, Reading Comprehension, Phonemic Awareness	10	Super Majority
				2	Small Groups	10	Super Majority
				3	Whole Group	7	Majority
				4	Reading Assessment	6	Majority
				1	Different Assessments and Testing	9	Super Majority
				2	What Works with Students' Needs, their Interests and Knowledge	8	Majority
		B	Making Decision about Literacy Instruction Strategies as Effective	3	Literacy Coaches' Help	5	Majority
				4	District Curriculum	5	Majority
				5	Grade-Level Teacher Meetings	3	Limited
				6	Monitor students progress	2	Limited
				1	Direct Engagement	8	Majority
				2	Indirect Engagement	2	Limited
2	Effective Support Resources In Literacy Learning Development Question 2: Would you describe the support you received from your principal, literacy coaches, parents, as well as other help you have and can apply to improve your literacy instruction strategies?	A	Principal	1	Direct Engagement	10	Super Majority
				2	Indirect Engagement	6	Majority
				3	Disengagement	2	Limited
		B	Literacy Coach	1	Direct Engagement	9	Super Majority
				2	Indirect Engagement	1	Rare
				3	Parents	1	Rare
		C	Parents	1	Direct Engagement	7	Majority
				2	Grade-Level Teachers	2	Limited
				3	Parents	1	Rare
		D	Colleagues/ Peer Teachers	1	Direct Engagement	9	Super Majority
				2	Indirect Engagement	1	Rare
				3	Parents	1	Rare
E	The Most Supportive	1	Literacy Coaches	7	Majority		
		2	Grade-Level Teachers	2	Limited		
		3	Parents	1	Rare		
3	Effective Factors In Literacy Learning Development Question 3: What do think about other factors, such as curriculum, a classroom environment, the relationship between teachers and their students, and others that impact teachers to improve and be creative in their literacy instruction strategies?	A	Knowing about Students' Background and Their Life Experiences	1	Essential	10	Super Majority
				1	Essential	10	Super Majority
				1	Essential	10	Super Majority
				1	Essential	10	Super Majority
4	Challenges and Difficulties In Literacy Learning Development Question 4: What challenges have you encountered when trying to use and apply the most effective literacy instruction strategies, and how did you respond to these challenges?	A	Time Issues	4	Limited	4	Limited
				3	Limited	3	Limited
				2	Limited	2	Limited
				1	Rare	1	Rare