Investigating Pre-service Teachers’ Learning and Integration of Content in School-University Partnerships and Traditional Field Experiences

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Abstract: This mixed methodology study examines pre-service teachers’ understanding and integration of content knowledge and classroom experiences in an undergraduate literacy class. Analyzing how pre-service teachers synthesize content knowledge with their classroom field experiences has the potential to enhance beginning teachers’ literacy development and sense of efficacy and growth. Two classrooms, one in a traditional campus setting and one in a service-learning elementary school setting were measured across two semesters. Pre-service teachers’ verbalizations using video data analysis, surveys, and interviews revealed subtle differences relating to connections among content literacy learning, pre-service efficacy, and field experience environments. This is important because pre-service teachers’ beliefs, conceptualizations, and pedagogy can influence their future classroom instruction and efficacy. This research may also deepen the understanding in the area of mentor mediated field experiences.

KEYWORDS: pre-service teachers’ education, partnership learning, video data analysis

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:
2. A school-university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community.

The concept of school-university partnerships has been investigated and recommended as an effective way to develop professional identities and improve instructional quality of both prospective and in-service teachers (Johnson, 2010; Peel, Peel, & Baker, 2002). Sometimes called service learning, school-university partnerships can provide hands-on learning and engagement for faculty and student learners (Duffy, 2005). Pre-service teachers have the opportunity to experience mastery teaching in action (Duffy, 2005), promoting a sense of
efficacy (Gurvitch, & Metzler, 2007; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Walker 2003). In return, master teachers assess and affirm their own pedagogical practices, building a sense of empowerment and improving teacher quality (Sandholtz, 2002).

School-university partnerships can also help to build a deeper sense of commitment and integration with the local community (Koliba, Campbell, & Shapiro, 2006) and provide authentic opportunities for pre-service and veteran teachers to address the needs of the community that they serve (Chen, 2004; Sim, 2006). School-university partnerships create “communities of practice” (Wenger, 1998) and require three key features: 1) active involvement in mutual processes of negotiating meaning-making; 2) imagination to create images of making connections across time and space; and 3) alignment of the energy and activities of those involved in the conceptualized “community of practice.”

The purpose of this study was to contribute to the existing knowledge regarding pre-service learning and school-university partnership teaching and learning. By examining traditional and on-site partnership undergraduate classes, the research aimed not only to identify potential differences between these two environments related to literacy learning, but also to shed light on the conceptual focus of the pre-service teachers’ professional preparation. By gaining a deeper understanding of these undergraduates’ conceptualization of literacy components, the researchers shared implications for both future research and classroom practices, further aligning content, instruction, and field service. This mixed-methodology study sought to address the following two research questions:

1. How do pre-service teachers in early literacy classes perceive their literacy experiences in traditional and partnership field experiences?
2. What similarities and differences exist between pre-service teachers’ verbalizations in traditional field experiences and university field experiences?

Theoretical Framework

This study is centered on four theoretical frames. First, the literacy assumptions of this study were grounded in sociocultural theory, which argues that learning is fundamentally a social activity where personal knowledge is co-constructed in a social space (Bruner, 1986; Vygotsky, 1962). Accordingly, this research sought to understand the impacts of situating pre-service teachers in authentic elementary literacy classrooms and scaffolding their pre-service literacy learning within elementary classroom settings.

Second, this study is centered on the mediated field-experiences framework (Zeichner, 2010; Zeichner & McDonald, 2011) and the partnership literacies framework (Zenkov et al., 2016). As a response to persistent criticism by teacher educators and researchers on the traditional university-based teacher training, the mediated field-experience (MFE) framework was proposed. MFE is “a school-based field experience directly connected to a methods course in a university teacher education program” (Campbell, 2012, p. 1). Due to the gap between the coursework and fieldwork, traditional university-based teacher education programs failed to prepare pre-service teachers (PSTs) sufficiently for classroom instruction for students with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Zeichner, Bowman, Guillen, & Napolitan, 2016). To reduce this gap between the coursework and fieldwork, the MFE framework requires pre-service teachers to observe classroom practices related to what they learned and discussed in the methods course, and invite classroom teachers to mediate the pre-service teachers’ content and
pedagogical knowledge. The school-based field experience in this partnership experience was “mediated.” One of the goals was to mediate the school-based field experience “within the methods course and the field by partnering with teachers who were generating local knowledge by critically examining their teaching practice” (Campbell, 2012, p. 56). Zeichner (2010) suggests that there are multiple ways to design and implement MFEs in different disciplines enacting the following pedagogical components:

- candidates observing and debriefing with K-12 teachers,
- university faculty modeling lessons or working with students using specific teaching practices,
- candidates rehearsing alone or in small groups some of these same practices, and
- debriefing the teaching and sometimes re-teaching.

Our third theoretical framework provides a closer lens on how literacy instruction and practices can be developed through partnerships among school, university, and community members. Zenkov et al. (2016) proposed, “a partnership concept of literacy suggests hybrid teaching, learning, and researcher roles for students, teachers, teacher educators, and the most inclusive set of our schools’ constituents” (p. 88). Accordingly, partnership literacies are “professional development opportunities with relevance to a wide range of educators—as teacher research options for English teachers and literacy educators and as project-based, core-searching clinical experiences for teacher candidates” (Zenkov et al., 2016, p. 88) This partnership literacies framework aligns with a core assumption of this study that all the participants of field-based literacy methods course including researchers, teachers, teacher candidates and students are active consumers of as well as producers of pedagogical knowledge regarding literacy instruction and practice (Zenkov, Corrigan, Beebe, & Sell, 2013).

Third, this work also relied on analytical frameworks developed for dialogic inquiry approach (Wells, 1999). Gordon Wells suggests that knowledge is constructed collaboratively by dialogic interactions among community of learners. In this study, pre-service teachers in two beginning literacy classrooms responded to open-ended prompts during focus group discussions. These discussions or “verbalizations” were video-recorded and analyzed, providing their shared insights regarding the understanding of literacy conceptualizations.

Fourth, we relied on Interaction Analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) to provide the methodology to analyze video data captured from groups of pre-service teachers. Interaction Analysis (IA) uses video as its primary data and, within it, frames the opportunity to replay sequences of interaction to multiple viewers, multiple times. Interaction Analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995) investigates human activities such as talk, nonverbal interaction, and the use of artifacts and technologies, identifying routine practices and problems and the resources for their solution. A basic assumption in Interaction Analysis is that knowledge and action are fundamentally social in origin, organization, and use, and are situated in particular social and material ecologies. Thus, expert knowledge and practice are situated in the interactions between members of a particular community engaged with the material world. The ability to revisit sequences of interaction allows researchers to analyze and identify regularities in the ways in which participants interpret content, instruction, and literacy practices.
Methodology

This mixed methodology study was conducted by a collaborative research team including faculty members, a cooperating teacher at the partnership site, and four graduate assistants. Two undergraduate literacy classes were taught in a medium-sized mid-western university across two semesters (Fall 2014 & Winter 2015), involving two classes per semester.

Participants and Settings

The first author was the instructor for all of the partnership and university sections involved in this study across two semesters. Eighteen pre-service teachers from each of two beginning literacy classes (for a total of 36) participated in this study each semester. Each semester, one class was conducted in a traditional university classroom setting, with field experiences assigned across the county, and the another session of the same class was held at a “partnership” school. One class each semester was taught on campus, adhering to a “traditional” format. In the “traditional” format, pre-service teachers attended class sessions in one classroom on the main campus of the university. The pre-service teachers completed their field experiences as assigned by the field education services school. The field experiences were assigned within a tri-county regional area.

The school-university partnership class was located on-site at a participating partnership school. The partnership school’s student field experiences were designed within the partnership school to provide coordinated time for the pre-service teachers to observe, collaborate, and experience elementary classroom experiences (See Figure 1). The intention of this partnership was to give pre-service teachers high-leverage practices (Windschitl, Thompson, & Braten, 2011) and innovative opportunities that aligned university courses with authentic school experiences with a community setting.
At the center of the partnership is a district elementary school, the university partnership school. The partnership’s school district is located a Midwestern city and educates roughly 3,000 students in grades K-12. As a school of choice, the school draws students from across the district and from neighboring districts to create a culturally, racially and linguistically diverse population. The composition of the student population represents a diverse racial population that includes: 60% Caucasian, 20% African American, 11% Asian, and 7% Hispanic. The partnership district receives Title I funding and implements Targeted Assistance programming, with 64% of the student population receiving free or reduced lunch. This partnership school serves students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

Originally the partnership grew from the School of Education and Human Services. Since then, it has expanded to include other schools at the university. Each department within the School of Education has taken part in serving the needs of the university’s and partnership school’s students and community needs. Literacy Nights, parent and student literacy workshops, health runs, and science fairs are just a few of the district/university, and community endeavors that have occurred. Meeting the needs of the district and university students has remained a key focus during this four-year university/district partnership. This coordination of scheduling, student support, instruction, and resources requires constant communication between the university and district administrators, coordinators, and faculty. In the school-university partnership setting, the pre-service teachers attended undergraduate classes in literacy, education, and science classes that allowed for pre-service teachers to engage in observations, strategy application, and classroom instruction. “Teacher Talks” connected pre-service teachers to mentor teachers and provided classroom experiences early in their undergraduate careers.

The partnership setting provided four main areas of opportunity for pre-service teachers: 1) on-site or service-learning classes, 2) field placements, 3) job-embedded professional learning, and 4) association with teacher educators (See Figure 1). This study focuses on the following three areas: field placements, onsite service-learning classes, and association with teacher educators.

Service learning engages students in a three-part process: classroom preparation through explanation and analysis of theories and ideas; service activity that emerges from and informs classroom context; and structured reflection tying service experience back to specific learning goals (Jeavons, 1995). The section labeled “job embedded professional learning” involved teacher professional development in the partnership school but was not an integral part of the study.

**Onsite literacy classes.** Classes onsite afforded pre-service teachers the opportunity to integrate theory into practice. These classes included lectures, focus group discussions, observations, and “Teacher Talks.” As pre-service teachers read from text, they gained foundational and content knowledge with the potential to transfer knowledge to practical experiences in real-time, authentic environments. Multi-grade level observations allowed them to increase their awareness of a variety of grade levels acting in several disciplines, including physical education, art and music.

**Field placements.** Undergraduate partnership classes took place within one building rather than across several schools. This allowed teachers and university students to build
networked relationships across time. Since the reading instructor taught the class within the building, another level of collaboration and support is built in.

**Job-embedded professional learning.** Professional learning included invitations to the teacher labs, study groups, and guided reading mentoring that was occurring in the elementary building. While the job-embedded learning has great potential for the future, scheduling conflicts and collaboration between the university and district made it difficult to create times that were conducive to both district and university staff and students.

**Associated teacher educators.** The onsite environment provided an academic space where mentor teachers become the “experts.” The experiences provided here give the pre-service teachers a sense of belonging and the mentor teachers a sense of confidence and affirmation of their teaching practices. One program that has evolved here is “Teacher Talks.” Teachers donate their time to visit university classes and talk to the undergraduates on a relevant literacy topic. This provides an authentic experience that links readings, content, practice, and application together. Superintendents, board members, Parent-Teacher Organizations (PTOs), deans, principals, faculty, university students, parents and children participated in site-based special events that arose from the need and desire to create additional spaces to expand the academic community. These special events include Literacy Night, Science Fair, Empty Bowl Project, and the Fall Harvest that were meant to create deeper connections to the families and communities served by the school.

The goal of the research was to compare the perspectives of the pre-service teachers in the traditional university setting to those of the pre-service teachers in the on-site partnership school setting with regards to their understanding of topic knowledge, classroom pedagogy, strategy use, and levels of involvement in each classroom experience.

**Data Collection**

In the fall of 2014 and winter of 2015, the first author, who was also the instructor in all sections of this undergraduate literacy class, collected focus group video data. During each of these semesters, one undergraduate class in a traditional university setting and one class located in an on-site partnership school participated in this study. Pre-service teachers were videotaped as they reflected on content knowledge, field observations, and participation in the classroom. Graduate assistants involved in the study videotaped focus group discussions. Each focus group consisted of 4-5 students. Selection for the focus groups was random.

The discussions evolved around four open-ended prompts related to: 1) topic knowledge from the readings, 2) a pedagogical scenario 3) perspectives on future teaching, and 4) connections to teaching experiences. Participants were given approximately 20 minutes prior to the taping to prepare their responses to these focus questions, which related to specific literacy topics. Participants could refer to these notes as they participated in the focus group discussions. Graduate assistants videotaped these sessions but did not interrupt the discussions.

Four sets of videos were collected in the Fall 2014 semester and five sets of videos were gathered in the Winter 2015 semester. The videos related to the following topics: 1) phonics, 2) comprehension, 3) literature approaches, and 4) differentiation. In Winter 2015, the videos focused especially on the topics of 1) beginning (early literacy) 2) phonics, 3) comprehension 1 (general), 4) comprehension 2 (text structures), and 5) instruction. Video data analysis of the focus group videos was used to analyze the discussions in each focus group, and to compare pre-
service-teachers’ discussions that occurred in both traditional and partnership settings. This study shares the results of the video data analysis and findings from the Fall 2014 and the Winter 2015 semesters.

Data Analysis

The nine sets of video data in total were examined using interaction analysis (Jordan & Henderson, 1995). Videos were analyzed using the Eudico Linguistic Annotator (ELAN) (Helwig, 2011) software. The ELAN software allowed the researcher and graduate assistants the ability to annotate, review, and easily share video files of the focus group discussions.

Due to the open-ended prompts, a priori codes were created that were related to perspectives of content, instruction, efficacy, and prior knowledge. These codes became the main categories or “tiers” for the analysis across sets of videos. A verbalization was considered an idea unit of discussion by the focus group. Subcategories of these codes were established. These reoccurring subcategories, referred to as “controlled vocabularies” established codes within tiers from the video data (see Table 1). It also allowed the researchers not only to code the established tiers at a deeper level, but also to return to video segments to review coding to identify examples or relevant segments.

Table 1

**Definition of Categories or “Tier” Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Codes or “Tiers”</th>
<th>Verbalizations References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>Direct reference to text (concept, idea, term), Theoretical reference (approach, theory), Ideas, strategies mentioned in text, the text mentioned regarding an important concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction</strong></td>
<td>The art and science of teaching…. beliefs, theoretical approach, instruction, or future academic actions Reference to a strategy or how one would conduct it. Practical suggestions for teaching literacy and its components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Efficacy</strong></td>
<td>Academic thoughts into their future teaching, how strongly they feel they understand a concept, approach, strategy, their confidence in following through with an idea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prior Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Reference to knowledge gained from own experiences (as student or teacher), past readings or classes, field experiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A coding descriptor sheet was created to guide coding. Sample segments of each tier can be viewed in Table 2. Preliminary analysis revealed subtle differences between the traditional on campus classes and the on-site partnership literacy classrooms.
Table 2

**Sample Segments of Coded Tiers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding Tiers</th>
<th>Video</th>
<th>Annotated Segment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td><em>Beginning</em> U W15</td>
<td>“Something that I thought was pretty interesting was just the importance of reading aloud and (actually) she said having the children orally read a word, how they speak just because of how you can see where they are with the literacy that they already have and you can kind of compare that and engage where they are within the learning from what they've already learned previously”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td><em>Beginning</em> P W15</td>
<td>“I said I would have them start by reading to themselves and completing a comprehension bookmark activity, I saw that in a classroom and I really liked it. It is just where they (you know) write the title, and the author and then they'll write three things they like about the book, and then answer like what was the main idea, main focus of the book. And then I said that (you know) having reading groups based on data found from testing them. and then once they are finished with the activity, they can read something funny.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficacy</td>
<td><em>Comp 2</em> P W15</td>
<td>“We have discussed this a lot in class. I think that something that makes, things that make reading hard to comprehend are just (you know) Not knowing the background information that you need to know (you know) in order to truly understand what you are reading and then like vocabulary. If the vocabulary is too hard for you, you are not going comprehend the information, because you don't know what these words mean, so I think we have over discussed it plenty of times, but... So I think those are two things that make reading really difficult. Also What makes reading easier or harder... just where you are at compared to where the book you're reading is at, you know, so that's my opinion.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Prior Knowledge | *Phonics* P W15 | "I noticed that in my classroom a big activity they do during group time (like) is they'll to like magnet boards....where they just have a big box of magnet letters and...they have their spelling list for the week and they have to go through and like pick out every single or like write? not write like put down ... every single word "What kind of magnetic board?" "2nd Grade.""okay""..""and so that way they're just sitting there spelling it out...and even it's wrong, in stead of having to erase it, they need to just move the letter around..."
Results and Discussion

Results of the university and partnership groups were analyzed by calculating the percentage of time that the focus groups spent discussing each of four topics: content, instruction, efficacy, and prior knowledge across the total time of each video (See Table 3). Each of the topics coded was considered mutually exclusive. The importance of quantitatively measuring the time spent discussing these four literacy topics revealed the focus of the pre-service teachers’ selective attention. Two teams of researchers, consisting of two doctoral candidates and a researcher established coding reliability. To do so, the teams coded a training video and then met biweekly to review and refine coding discrepancies.

Table 3

Tier Codes and Subcategories or “Controlled Vocabulary” Tiers” for Video Data Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Tier</th>
<th>Instruction Tier</th>
<th>Efficacy Tier</th>
<th>Prior Knowledge Tier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Controlled Vocabularies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Literacy Components</td>
<td>Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td>Philosophy/Beliefs</td>
<td>Academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Rationale/Purpose</td>
<td>Field Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once this training analysis was completed, each coding team analyzed one set of videos at a time, returning to review the coding as a full research team. Reliability for each video for each team was established. The reliability results ranged on average in the 75-96%.

The results of these findings provide insight into the current focus of these undergraduates and lead to a better understanding of how to monitor and adjust pre-service literacy instruction. The findings are reported in two levels. Tier level results are reported in percentage of time that each group spent discussing content, instruction, efficacy, and prior knowledge. The controlled vocabulary level, reported in frequencies (Table 4), allowed for a more in-depth look at what specific topics made up these pre-service teachers’ conversations.

This layer of analysis at the controlled vocabulary (subcategory) level was conducted to review a finer grade of coding analysis that was with each of the tiers.

Table 4

Controlled Vocabulary Frequency by Tier

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Tier</th>
<th>Instruction Tier</th>
<th>Efficacy Tier</th>
<th>Prior Knowledge Tier</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Additionally, a sequential mapping of tier level patterns was created. This mapping charted the sequential order of coded verbalizations to investigate if any patterns of the topic codes followed another topic code. It was also used to investigate potential patterns of discussions characteristic of the university and partnership groups. This sequential mapping created a visual map of the order of the coded verbalizations. Observing these patterns could reveal both similarities and differences in patterns between the university and partnership groups.

Finally, at the end of each semester, a final survey was given to students, asking them about their experiences. These surveys captured the pre-service teachers’ conceptualizations immediately after their classroom experiences, and could potentially guide future literacy instruction. Responses from partnership group (Table 5, Question 11) regarding their partnership experience have the potential to assess the understandings of approaches, strategies, of the pre-service teachers as well as confidence in their literacy experiences and professional collaborations. It could also inform future partnership instruction and academic endeavors.

Table 5

Top 3 Responses of Final Classroom Survey (Partnership Classes, both semesters)

<p>| Question 11: What are your thoughts about the advantages/disadvantages of being on-site at the Partnership school? What are your thoughts about the “Teacher Talks”? |
|---|---|
| Categories | Top 3 Responses |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Observations</strong></th>
<th>Observing in many different grade levels/seeing many different styles of teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Observing art class, gym class, and music class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I also like that my field placement was at __________.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning</strong></td>
<td>Using strategies that we learned in class and applying them to our field classroom right away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Able to create a much better sense of community within the school as you spend so much more time there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My learning in this course transferred in such a genuine way into my future as a teacher because I got to grow as an educator in a real environment where our instruction was coming to life all around us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teacher Talks</strong></td>
<td>I also liked the teacher talks since they were real teachers and real experiences and then if we wanted we could go to them in that building and ask further questions about some of their ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The teacher talks were also extremely beneficial because we were able to learn from current elementary teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is a much different experience to hear something from a teacher who is in the classroom everyday than to read about it in a textbook. It makes it much more real and it carries more weight coming from them, especially in a school like where the teachers are so highly valued.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Comments</strong></td>
<td>You get to interact more with the students and see grades k-5 and all the specials that the students go to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The most beneficial part about being on-site of an elementary school is how the classroom are set up and how the teachers run their literacy block every day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You get to see all the different strategies that are talked and learned about in class play out in real classroom situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Helps you become more of a professional in your field and closer to getting your foot in the door with a job at this elementary school in the future.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disadvantages There wasn’t enough time. Since there was so much to do,

I also think that the forums, even though they are a lot of work, should go through to the end of the semester.

When the elementary school shuts down for snow days or cold days, it cancels our class

Primary Code Level Video Analysis (topic or “tier” level)

The focus of this study was to capture the conversations of the undergraduates with a focus on how they synthesized content, instruction and field experiences across specific literacy topics, early in their literacy careers. By attending to the perceptions of pre-service teachers’ literacy understandings at this point in their undergraduate training, it is the hope that a deeper understanding of their conceptualizations will bridge the gap between university coursework and field experiences. In addition to coding annotations of focus group discussions in our annotation software, the research team calculated that the percentages of time spent on content, instruction, efficacy and prior knowledge (tiers) varied widely depending on the focus of the literacy topic video (phonics, comprehension, differentiation, etc.). Both university and partnership groups spent over one third to over one half (27-71%) of their total time discussing or connecting content to instruction. Since this study involved undergraduates early in their literacy understandings, these results may reflect that regardless of setting, these undergraduates are attempting to make sense out of literacy foundations and the practices that they may see occurring in their field experiences.

Both the university and partnership groups drew upon on prior knowledge, consisting of personal, academic, and field experiences to frame their focus group discussions. Recent and current field experiences and personal and academic memories would come to mind and be synthesized with content learning (see Table 6).

Table 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Duration of Tier Annotation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Length of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
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<td>P2</td>
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<td>P2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27
The lowest percentage of time spent discussing their prior knowledge for both groups came when attempting to discuss comprehension, related to text structure. While they had been introduced to text structures related to comprehension, it would be safe to say that these more specific understandings in this area need many more experiences for these participants to make connections to the classroom practices. When the focus groups discussed differentiation, and literature approaches, very little time was spent discussing prior knowledge in these areas. There could be at least two reasons for this. Differentiation, literature approaches, and comprehension (particularly related to text structures) require a synthesis of foundational topic knowledge and skills related to these more complex topics. For these pre-service teachers, their journey is just beginning. Another explanation could be that these areas are more difficult to recognize in classroom practices, accentuating the need for explicit explanations and observances to build deeper understandings in complex areas.

Conversations that were coded as efficacy occupied approximately 24% of the pre-service teachers’ total discussion time. There does not seem to be a clear connection between efficacy percentages and field placement environments. In other words, the discussion of efficacy did not occupy more of the groups’ discussion time whether they were in a partnership school or the more traditional university field experiences. Where there did seem to be a connection was across the efficacy and prior knowledge tiers. In 4 out of 9 videos, the partnership school participants made connections to prior knowledge to include past and present field experiences (prior knowledge), where the university group relied more on the beliefs and philosophy (efficacy). While not conclusive, one explanation could be that the partnership group had experiences that allowed them to synthesize their text reading classroom experiences, pedagogical understanding, and grade level experiences into a more cohesive understanding.

More study is needed in the area of how pre-service teachers integrate these pre-service field experiences.
Controlled Vocabulary Video Analysis

A finer grain analysis focused on sub-categorical levels (controlled vocabulary level) to review data that might reveal more in-depth about the discussion focus. Controlled vocabulary codes were subcategories that were concepts coded within each category or “tier”. This data was reported in frequencies and was reported within major conceptual categories (see Table 5). A coding descriptor sheet was developed as a guide to coding the controlled vocabulary level.

Within the tiers for each video (content, instruction, efficacy, prior knowledge), a controlled vocabulary was established. These sub-categorical codes or “controlled vocabularies” were created from the video data, using the training video and one set of videos at the onset of the coding practice. These subcategories allowed researchers to define each tier in-depth (see Table 3).

While results varied per video and discussion focus, patterns became evident within the two groups and across videos (See Table 4). Across the videos, in the content tier both the university and partnership groups discussed text and the importance of the literacy component. Making connections to content was slightly higher with the partnership group, particularly with more complex topic content such as the video found in the differentiation and literature approach videos. One explanation might be that within the field experiences provided at the partnership school, the pre-service teachers were able to increase awareness of these complex issues as they occur within an authentic classroom, followed by discussions of what they were observing.

Looking across the videos at the instruction tier the partnership group generally spent a larger percentage of time discussing instruction. The typical cyclic pattern of discussion by the partnership group may explain this difference (see Figure 2 and 3). There was more of a “cycling back” between discussion of content, instruction and field practices that provided connections to, and examples of practice. These connections are important because the strong connections of current practice can support further teaching actions and decisions. This is significant because it addresses the gaps that have previously existed between university coursework and community-based field experiences (Windschitl, Thompson, & Braten, 2011).

Figure 2. Typical Discussion Pattern of University Group
Both university and partnership groups across videos remained focused on strategy and example within their instruction discussions, rather than mentioning the classroom environment or literacy approaches. Since these pre-service teachers are early in their literacy instruction, the focus on practical, concrete connections makes sense.

In this finer grain analysis, the discussion of efficacy (literacy components, philosophy, and rationale) reflected the pre-service teachers’ philosophy of teaching and instruction rather than the deeper understanding of a rationale, the “why” of teacher practices observed. Finally, across the prior knowledge tier, both groups referenced their prior academic experiences consistently. However, the partnership group generally referenced their field experiences a larger portion of the time, giving examples of specific classroom events, embedded with their discussion. This is significant because this analysis of efficacy looked at pre-service teachers’ class-to-field connections. Potentially, this could inform optimal settings for pre-service teaching.

**Sequential Mapping Analysis**

The last series of analyses focused on what sequential patterns across tiers might reveal about the focus groups patterns of literacy discussion. For this analysis, each coded segment was considered one unit. These units represented the sequence in which the coded tiers occurred. The sequential patterns were developed from annotation statistics from each video file located
within the data set. Figure 4 represents a snapshot of this analysis, and allowed us to look for potential patterns of discussion across multiple videos.

![Figure 4. Typical Discussion Pattern of Partnership Group. 1=Content, 2=Instruction, 3=Efficacy, 4=Prior Knowledge](image)

A broad view of the sequential mapping reveals a cyclic pattern of discussion for both the university and partnership discussion groups. Focus group discussions started with content knowledge. Following the discussion of content, both groups generally moved on to discussing instruction, followed by relating to rationale and philosophy, components of the efficacy tier. The cyclic pattern for the university group (Figure 2) reflects the general sequential pattern seen within each video. The university group generally discussed content, instruction, followed by efficacy. This pattern repeated itself throughout the video, depending on duration of video. Prior knowledge, related to personal, academic, and field experiences was discussed much later in the discussion. Comparatively, the partnership group cycled through their discussions continuously connecting content, instruction, efficacy, and prior knowledge. The partnership group integrated their current academic and personal experiences as well as past and present field experiences (see Figure 3). A possible explanation in the variance of the cyclic patterns is that efforts were made in the partnership field experience to integrate content knowledge, classroom observations and classroom, and field experiences. These connections are reflected in the flow of discussions and the constant connections across all four areas as they are integrating knowledge, instructional practices, and literacy understanding.

A final survey was given to all participants in the study. Each participant responded to the final survey. However, partnership participants additionally responded to question 11: “What are your thoughts about the advantages/disadvantages of being on-site at a partnership school? What are your thoughts about the ‘Teacher Talks?’” This question was specifically focused on the partnership experience. The intent of question 11 to provide an opportunity to respond openly about this partnership experience. These responses were categorized. A chart displaying the top 3 response in four different areas can be found in Table 6. Their responses reflect an overview of their field experience. A few of these responses are:

- There are so many advantages to being on-site at the partnership school. I loved being able to go into different classrooms, even a specials class. I also really enjoyed being able to go and see different teachers from the same grade. I also like that my field placement was at __________. This gave us the chance to not only get to know our teachers
better, but also the rest of the staff. I had a great field teacher, whom I learned so much from. Overall, it was one of the best experiences at the university.

The teacher talks were really beneficial. I loved being able to hear the teachers side of things. You get to see it in action in the observations, and then you actually hear the teachers talk about what they are doing, how they are doing it. I also like them because we have the opportunity to ask the teacher questions.

There are only advantages for me being on site at the partnership school. Getting to see teachers using what we just talked about in class was extremely valuable; one of the most valuable parts of my experience in the education department so far. The fact that our field placements were at _______ as well really helped me feel like a part of the learning community/family. My learning in this course transferred in such a genuine way into my future as a teacher because I got to grow as an educator in a real environment where our instruction was coming to life all around us.

As far as the teacher talks go, I wish we had more of them. I know the original plan was to have one each week; it would have been great if it worked out that way! I loved hearing how teachers organized their instruction in order to make it work for them. It was a great way to see the variety of teaching methods that can be used; there is no one perfect way to teach!

These reflections suggest that the pre-service teachers’ experiences were valued. In addition, it supports the results of the sequential mapping, in the pattern of the pre-service teachers’ discussions of content and instruction, and then integrating their current field experiences into the discussion and build connections to community organizations and their local schools.

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**Implications**

**Pre-service Instruction/Service Learning**

From the beginning of this project, the intent was to not only compare and contrast differences that were correlated with the two pre-service teaching settings, but also to capture the focus of the undergraduate literacy pre-service teachers. In our first research question, we sought to investigate their conceptualizations and perspectives on literacy instruction and their field experience environments, and how they “made sense” of classroom pedagogy early in their
literacy classes and developed their literacy schema and then applied their understandings of these conceptualizations and perspectives to their filed experience.

Pre-service teachers need opportunities to be immersed in authentic literacy environments, experiencing “real” classroom literacy in action that are reflective of the communities and the social context they teach in (Zeichner, 2010). Furthermore, in contrast with the more traditional fragmented field experiences, the collaborative partnerships provided a more cohesive field experience with a network of on-site, familiar administrators, teachers, and faculty supports. The university/partnership experience allowed faculty and instructors to coordinate embedded teaching and learning, offering the pre-service teachers opportunities to connect content, instruction, and field practices. In this study, the participants also referred frequently to the “Teacher Talks”. Teacher talks occurred in the elementary partnership school each week. Elementary teachers met with the pre-service teachers and discussed classroom instruction, literacy practices, strategies, and teaching experiences that occurred at the partnership school. There was also time set aside that allowed for pre-service teachers the time to share their concerns and wondering with experienced teachers. These veteran teachers from the partnership school volunteered 45 minutes to speak to the pre-service students related to the topic focus. While these teacher talks were videotaped, they were not a part of the analysis for this study.

This mediated field practice has potential to increase their self-efficacy as future teachers. This embedded environment allowed the undergraduates to read text, observe classrooms, and to participate in instructional tasks, side-by-side, with mentor teachers. As Zeichner (2010) proposed, this partnership school setting contributes to creating “hybrid spaces in pre-service teacher education programs that bring together school and university-based teacher educators and practitioner and academic knowledge in new ways to enhance the learning of prospective teachers”.

In our second research, we explored similarities and differences between pre-service teachers’ verbalizations in traditional field experiences and university field experiences by analyzing the time spent discussing the four main a priori codes of content, instruction, efficacy, and prior knowledge. While the results were highly dependent on the topic, it revealed not only the conversations of the group, but also how much time they spent focusing in each of these literacy areas. This is important because from this measurement, literacy instruction could be monitored and adjusted to meet the undergraduate understandings and misunderstandings.

**Literacy Instruction and Its Components**

Videotaping of focus group discussions in a traditional setting and a partnership setting allowed researchers to listen to the connections that pre-service teachers made between their literacy learnings. Through the video data analysis, the researchers learned that, early in their literacy classes, both groups relied heavily on their text reading for their content knowledge. When attempting to conceptualize topics such as comprehension, differentiation, and literature approaches, the participants had a more difficult time. While the university group relied on their philosophical beliefs, the partnership group relied more on sources of information that included frequent discussions of their current fields located in the partnership schools. These results varied per video and can be found in in Table 3 at the sub-categorical or “controlled vocabulary” level. These results also emphasize the need for increased modeling of more complex literacy approaches, differentiation, and sociocultural impacts in the classroom. It is not enough to
merely talk about these literacy components on pedagogy and approaches. As literacy concepts became increasingly complex, such as in the case of comprehension and literature approaches, the video discussions revealed that the pre-service teachers had vague conceptualizations of this content knowledge and additional modeling, practice, and participation in authentic practices in these areas are needed. The pre-service teachers also referred frequently to the “Teacher Talks” that occurred at the partnership school. These teacher talks gave pre-service teachers opportunities to questions veteran teachers regarding their strategies and instruction in order to deeper understand classroom practices. University/partnership experiences also allowed faculty and instructors to coordinate embedded learnings that offer these opportunities to connect content, instruction, and field experiences. These talks gave pre-service teachers a sense of belonging to the educational community.

Research and Video Data Analysis

Video data analysis allowed the researchers to keep events intact for viewing and analysis. The single camera allows for a limited range of viewing. The ELAN tool used in this study provided researchers and coders with a way to view and revisit the video for both training and coding purposes. It also allowed the researchers to share and store files electronically. Through this software, coding schemes and annotations could be entered as data into the annotation categories (tiers). In addition, ELAN enabled tiers from various researchers and coders to be merged allowing for checks on frequency, reliability, and within and across tier measurements. The capability of creating broader categories or domains (tiers) and subcategories (controlled vocabulary) allowed for deeper coding analysis. Using this software, segments or video clips could easily be marked as exemplar cases for discussion and instruction. Therefore, ELAN can be considered as a useful tool for researchers and educational professionals to analyze class video data for discussion patterns, and categories of conversations of participants.

Conclusion

Collaborative school-university partnerships can offer benefits to all of the stakeholders and participants involved. For the district, university support can provide university resources, professional development opportunities, academic supports, and most importantly, multi-level support for student needs. For the university, a district can provide authentic and situated academic environments for pre-service teaching experiences, opportunities to observe real classrooms in action, and a chance to work side by side with mentor teachers.

The in-depth analysis of the nine sets of videos in this study allowed the researchers to closely examine several aspects of focused discussions in an undergraduate literacy class. These comparisons provided insights into the complexities of pre-service teacher conversations. Findings from this study will also contribute to discussion about the role of school-university partnerships on pre-service teacher development. In addition, the use of video data to capture authentic focus group discussions will allow researchers to explore the complexities of pre-service teachers’ development in ways that are difficult or impossible when research must rely on transcriptions or other reductions of the video data stream.

Additionally, vibrant professional teaching and learning cultures require collaborative support on the part of district and university administrators, staff, university instructors, and
students, all of whom have great value within their perspective academic communities. Partnerships between universities and local districts provide an environment in which the goal of preparing practice-ready teachers and supporting the needs of a diverse demographic population can be pursued in a reciprocally beneficial and effective way.

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