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Changes in teachers' early reading instruction in one year

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Aim of the Study

1. Determine the teachers' knowledge and understanding of phonological awareness and phonics
2. Document the effectiveness of teachers' instruction in teaching phonological awareness and phonics using a Teacher Observation Rubric which includes elements from the Theory of Instruction and Direct Instruction.
3. Provide professional development, mentoring, coaching and feedback to teachers before, during and after each observation throughout the year
4. Document the effectiveness of the professional development model
5. Determine whether teachers' knowledge and beliefs about teaching reading, phonics and phonological awareness changes as a result of the professional development and using *Let's Decode*

Research Questions

1. What do the participants know (pre and post) about phonological awareness and phonics?
2. What do teachers believe about reading instruction (pre and post) participating in the professional development and coaching?
3. Do teachers change their language of instruction when teaching phonological awareness and phonics?
4. Is the professional development model seen to be effective and purposeful by the teachers?

Background/Significance of the study

- Evidence-based research in literacy instruction
- The Western Australian context
- Relevant research
- The Australian Curriculum: *English*
- *Let's Decode*

Significance of the Study

- There has been worldwide debate about the teaching of reading and the inclusion/exclusion of phonics in reading instruction
- Evidence based research states that phonics should be taught in an explicit, direct and systematic manner
- In Australia, there is now more of a focus on literacy in the years before formal schooling
- The inclusion of phonological awareness and phonics in the Australian Curriculum-English
- Research states that many teachers do not have the knowledge or understanding of phonics and phonological awareness or how to teach it effectively
- **This research study provides teachers with the language of instruction (*Let's Decode*), the teaching sequence and the knowledge and understanding of why each element of teaching phonics and phonological awareness is important through professional development, coaching and mentoring**

Theoretical framework

Two theoretical frameworks

1. Professional Development model –

- Knowledge Application Information Systems (KAIS), (Ramey & Ramey, 2008)
- Formative Assessment Model (FAM), (Hamre et al. 2008).

2. Theory of Instruction (Englemann & Carnine, 1991)

- Theory of Instruction Centred approaches
- *Let's Decode* (Formentin, 1992)

Methodology

- Mixed methods research design
- 15 participants: K, PP, Year 1 teachers
- **Data collection (Pre):** Teacher Knowledge Survey, Theoretical Orientation Reading Profile and ABC-RIT
- **Classroom Observation 1** (Record observations on the Teacher Observation Rubric)
- **Professional Development workshop** – *Let's Decode*
- **Classroom Observations 2, 3, 4 & 5** (Record observations on the Teacher Observation Rubric)
- Ongoing mentoring and coaching in-between the observations as requested or required
- **Data collection (Post):** Teacher Knowledge Survey, Theoretical Orientation Reading Profile, ABC-RIT and short interview.

Preliminary Findings

Quantitative

Teacher Observation Rubric

- 11 elements were taken directly from the principles of the Theory of Instruction and used to mark the changes in teachers' instruction during each observation
- A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted .
- There were statistically significant differences between the 5 observations.
- For example, there were statistically significant differences between all teachers' instructions for the element of:

Analysis of Behaviour

(Manipulation of the environment to maximise student learning)

- **Presentation of appropriately paced lessons to maintain motivation**

Between observations one and five ($p = .025$) and observations two and five ($p = .025$)

Limitations and areas for future research

Limitations

1. Difficulties faced when organising observation visits (due to lack of communication between the Deputy Principals and teachers)
2. Deputy Principals not supporting the teachers in their implementation of *Let's Decode* or understanding the purpose, value and reasons for using *Let's Decode* in literacy programs
3. Deputy Principals not making their expectations clear to teachers in terms of a commitment to the implementation of *Let's Decode* long term in their literacy programs post their involvement in the research

Areas for future research

1. Similar study with more participants
2. Focus on graduate teachers and their first year of teaching to document changes to their knowledge and instruction