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Developing the Instructional Potential of Teachers in the Content Areas: An Affective Component in Reading Teacher Education

Cynthia M. Morawski

Methods courses on content area reading instruction have been instrumental in helping teachers recognize the important role that this educational approach can play in developing their students' abilities to read. In particular, these courses have provided teachers with instructional gains in such forms as a better understanding of content area reading, a stronger background on the reading process, and specific teaching strategies (Wedman and Robinson, 1988). Nevertheless, it appears that many teachers are not taking advantage of the "naturally occurring opportunities in their classes" (Weber, Puleo, and Kurth, 1989, p. 42) to integrate content area reading into their daily teaching agendas.

A variety of factors, from time restrictions imposed by the curriculum to a lack of continued support, have been attributed to teachers' seeming reluctance to become active participants in their students' literacy development. Models for improved methods courses which address these factors have been presented in the professional literature (Gove, 1981; Monahan, 1987). However, in order to encourage teachers to make conscious and active use of their new theoretical and practical knowledge on content area reading, attention also needs to be devoted to the examination and evolvement of the perceptions which they associate with the reading process. According to Lortie (1975), "unless teachers... are aware of their preconceptions and internalizations, the varieties of instructional methods they study may be wasted" (p. 231).

The purpose of this paper is to present a model for including an affective component in methods courses on content area reading. The goal of the component is to help teachers develop an understanding of their current beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to reading acquisition in order that they can better accept and use content area reading instruction in their particular teaching situations. The component's theoretical background as well as the practical applications used to achieve the above goal are given special emphasis.

Background

Teachers associate a variety of beliefs, experiences, and emotions with the teaching process. The importance of developing teachers' awareness of these perceptual elements for the purpose of enhancing classroom instruction is well documented in the professional literature (Adler, 1930; Combs, Blume, Newman, and Wass, 1974; Hunt, 1987; Jersild, 1955).

In the specific area of reading teacher education, recognition is given to the promotion of teachers' self-awareness for the advancement of the literacy needs of their students. Here, special emphasis is placed on identifying and examining past and present influences which have helped to shape teachers' current perceptions and practices related to reading instruction.

Personal narratives or stories about teaching have been advocated as a valuable means by which this process of selfinquiry and action can occur. Concentrating on the creation and revision of instructional stories in their course on teaching writing to diverse learners, Abt-Perkins and Gomez (1993) recounted how they guided inservice teachers to begin to "clarify for themselves how their personal perspectives had specific consequences for their literacy instruction" (p. 201). Hollingsworth (1991) reported on her own immersion in narrative inquiry which allowed her to redefine her role in teacher education and "change her sense of responsibility from one of cognitive change in new teachers to epistemological change" (p. 1). Consequently, teachers in her classes were challenged to confront their beliefs and alter their existing practices for literacy instruction.

Assuming a phenomenological position toward acquiring self-knowledge, Hunsberger (1985) conveyed the importance of having preservice teachers examine their own, as well as others', reading experiences in order to gain insight into their students' literacy behaviors. Suggested practices for carrying out this goal include engaging teachers in interactive readings with children's stories and providing specific questions for teachers to reflect on their current reading behaviors.

The value of studying personal reading experiences is further supported by research which focused on teachers' earlier memories of learning to read. Several studies (Manna and Misheff, 1987; Danielson, 1989; Morawski and Brunhuber, in press) revealed that teachers associate a variety of positive as well as negative literacy experiences and emotions which can influence their perceptions and actions related to reading instruction. Recommendations for practical application in reading teacher education programs included such activities as writing about early language events (Danielson, 1989) and

studying investigations into the subjective and transactional nature of reading (Manna and Misheff, 1987).

One study in particular (Morawski and Brunhuber, in press) concluded that the inclusion of an affective learning component in methods courses on content area reading would greatly facilitate the process of acquiring and acting on self-knowledge related to literacy instruction. In addition to offering examples of activities for obtaining such a goal, the study provided a summary of a theoretical framework for implementing the component. Here, active reflection would play the central role while journals and verbal interaction would serve as the two main vehicles for guiding teachers through the reflective stages.

In order to develop further the application of self-inquiry and action to reading teacher education in the content areas, a detailed plan for putting the above affective component into practice was produced. This plan, which is contained in the section that follows, is intended to complement and support the development of teachers' theoretical backgrounds and practical skills related to content area reading instruction.

The model reflection

The practice of reflection is an integral part of teacher education (Adler, 1991; Liston and Zeichner, 1990). In particular, reflection is "concerned with the problem of developing in teachers the ability to perceive and respond to particular contexts and situations in ways that will facilitate the development of informed judgment and skilled teaching" (Adler, 1991, p. 145). Within the affective component, the focus of teachers' reflection would be their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors associated with reading, particularly in connection with their awareness, acceptance and use of content area

reading instruction. "If teacher educators are to enable...teachers to act wisely and ruminate over what constitutes good reason for their educational actions, then reflection over and inspection of personal beliefs, passions, values, images, and prejudices should occur" (Liston and Zeichner, 1990).

For example, those teachers who have always misperceived themselves as ineffective readers would want to examine the reasons behind their views as well as the role that these views have played in their classroom instruction. Their new knowledge would then be used to discover and capitalize on their strengths as well as to develop a plan to address their concerns.

Maintaining a journal

The value of the journal is well recognized in the field of reading teacher education (Allen, 1991; Moore, 1991; Schell and Danielson, 1991). Journals "stand as a written record of practice, [and] they provide teachers with a way to revisit, analyze, and evaluate their experiences over time and in relation to broader frames of reference" (Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1990, p. 86). In particular, they have encouraged "teachers to reflect on the issues of content-area subcultures and the value of pedagogical strategies" (Bean and Zulich, 1989, p. 35).

Using data generated by the activities and assignments of the methods course on content area reading instruction, journals can provide teachers with a range of unstructured to formalized experiences (Schell and Danielson, 1991) for engaging in active reflection. For instance, an open-ended diary could provide teachers, who are apprehensive about sharing their feelings and experiences related to reading, with a "safe environment for thoughts, far from the scrutiny of harsh critics" (Wibel, 1991, p. 45). Here, teachers choose the focus of

their writing as well as the audience with whom they will share.

In more structured types of journals, commonly known as learning logs (Moore, 1991), reading journals (Allen, 1991), and dialogue journals (Bean and Zulich, 1989; Schell and Danielson, 1991), the course instructor or a classmate would provide teachers with regular feedback on their written entries. As a result, teachers would find "ways to look at the experience from different viewpoints" (Staton, 1980, p. 517) and "become more aware of how they, as teachers, are affecting their students" (Moore, 1991, p. 46) and their reading development.

Journal formats can range from one to multiple sections. However, the use of two or more sections provides for greater flexibility. For example, one particular learning journal was "divided into two sections — a section for personal entries and a section for specific responses to assigned readings" (Moore, 1991, p. 36).

Verbal interaction

Verbal interaction in such class structures as dyads (Freiberg, Waxman, and Houston, 1987), small group discussions (Volker, 1988), and class seminars (Evans, 1991) would be an equally important vehicle for promoting active reflection in a methods class on content area reading. An ideal complement to the journal is verbal interaction which can help teachers to "foster their understanding of knowledge [and experiences] by talking about it with others" (Volker, 1988, p. 33). In particular, it can provide teachers with a greater variety of perspectives from which they could extend, reinterpret, and reinforce their beliefs and practices related to reading instruction in their teaching areas. In short, verbal

interaction must be "both supportive and challenging" (Goodman, 1984, p. 22).

For instance, a whole class discussion on classmates' successful experiences with implementing content area reading strategies could encourage some teachers to rethink their views on incorporating reading instruction into their own teaching. In a dyad where interaction is more concentrated, an aliterate teacher could provide a teacher who is a proficient reader with a heightened sense of awareness of the reading difficulties which some students face each day in their content area classes.

The balanced use of written and verbal interaction can produce a learning situation where multidimensional opportunities for reflective activity thrive. However, the format and style of journal or type of verbal interaction that the methods instructor chooses to use will depend on such important factors as the duration of the course, the size of the class, the time available for writing and responding to entries, standards for evaluation, class members' experiences with group process, and the extent to which journals are used in other courses (Schell and Danielson, 1991).

Reflective activities

Included below are a variety of means by which teachers can become immersed in the reflective process via verbal interaction and journaling. In particular, these activities will provide teachers with the working material for addressing their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors associated with reading in the content areas. In order that the needs of the teachers are best met, the selection of activities should be flexible and collaborative. For example, in a situation where two activities have been assigned, the first one can be a requirement for the whole class, while the second one can be an elective. During

the implementation phase of the reflective activities, it is important that an assortment of group as well as individual practices can be used. For instance, the summative phases of keeping a reflective journal can be enhanced when teachers are provided with opportunities to share and receive peer feedback on their entries.

Field experiences. According to Memory (1983), "the most effective way to motivate [teachers] in content reading is through a field-based practicum" (p. 117). Personal participation in the development of students' reading abilities can be found in a variety of learning arrangements such as tutoring a discouraged reader and reading to younger children to enrich their language backgrounds (Memory, 1983; Wray, 1993). In addition to sensitizing teachers to the needs of developing readers, such experiences have the potential to help teachers reevaluate and change their own perspectives on reading instruction. For example, facilitating novel study sessions for a group of upper elementary school students could very well instill a sense of confidence for reading instruction in teachers who had always considered themselves to be ineffective readers. On the other hand, teachers who had never viewed themselves as anything but highly capable in the area of reading could be persuaded to expand their repertoires of teaching strategies after working with illiterate secondary school students.

In addition to maintaining a log which would include such sections as anecdotal notes, reflections, and lesson plans and evaluation, a class seminar would be an essential feature of the practical field experience. Here, teachers can present the concerns and successes of their cases for part of the class time on a weekly or biweekly basis. Immersion in children's and young adult literature. There is an abundance of children's and young adult books which can be used to enrich content area lessons in a multitude of ways (Smith, 1991) — such as facilitating the understanding of an important science concept by means of a bath time story (Allen, 1980) or emphasizing the aesthetic side of insects by using an anthology of poetry (Fleischman, 1988). However, there are teachers who have had limited exposure to literature as a child and consequently "perceive themselves as disadvantaged readers, discouraged about never catching up" (Manna and Misheff, 1987, p. 164). Immersing these teachers in meaningful activities related to children's and young adult literature would greatly help them to become knowledgeable and assured users of such works for content area reading instruction.

For example, an instructor could suggest a teacher read children's classics to elementary age students as one method for managing a limited exposure to literature as a child. Another teacher, who lacks the confidence to integrate the various kinds of young adult literature into daily teaching plans, could be encouraged to collaborate with a group of classmates to create co-listed teaching units based on novels which have content area themes. Examples of other activities which could motivate teachers to make informed and effective use of literature for content area instruction are: building a personal library of subject area books for younger people, visiting children's bookstores and libraries, attending book fairs, producing annotated bibliographies related to specific subject areas, and writing a children's book about a content area concept. For each of the above activities, teachers would be encouraged to keep detailed notes on the particular events and subsequent reflections that contributed to their growth in the use of literature as part of their classroom instruction.

This information could then be processed further through written and verbal interaction with class members.

Bibliotherapy. "Bibliotherapy refers to the guided reading of written materials in gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's therapeutic needs" (Riordan and Wilson, 1989, p. 506). In a reading methods course on content area reading, "bibliotherapeutic experiences for teachers can provide insights to inspire and empower them as they struggle with classroom challenges" (Lumpkin, 1992, p. 54). In particular, bibliotherapy can not only help teachers contend with the demands of teaching reading-disabled students, but it can also provide assistance to teachers who are coping with their own insecurities related to the reading process. In both cases, "reflection upon experience, both our personal experience and that of others we know or find in literature, is of utmost importance" (Hunsberger, 1985, p. 12). Such experiences can be found in an assortment of reading materials, from novels to nonfictional accounts (Hildreth, 1992; Negin, 1979). Stroud (1981) provides a number of criteria to consider for making appropriate selections.

For example, to reach a better understanding of the various signs of student discouragement such as absenteeism, incomplete assignments, and procedural display of academic engagement, teachers would benefit from reading and discussing such fictional works as *Do Bananas Chew Gum?* (Gilson, 1980) and a case study of a secondary school student and his problems with the printed word (Morawski, 1990). Each of these two works offer a unique view of a student's feelings, thoughts, and actions related to personal experiences with reading difficulties. Such opportunities for vicarious participation in the course of a student's reading development would also help teachers to confront and examine anew any doubts about their own reading abilities which may have

been preventing them from reaching their full instructional potential.

Group as well as individual practices for implementing bibliotherapy in a reading methods course can be adapted from a variety of sources found in the professional literature (Davison, 1983; Lehr, 1981). In particular, Hildreth (1992) and Lumpkin (1992) have included guidelines and activities specifically related to teacher education.

Exploration of early influences. According to Morawski and Brunhuber (in press), the perceptions that teachers have of the reading process can influence their teaching of reading, including content area reading instruction. Teachers' early recollections of learning to read and their family constellations in relation to reading development are two sources which can provide valuable insights into such perceptions. In the case of early recollections, teachers would concentrate on each of their earliest memories of learning to read as "a single incident which can be reduced to a 'one time' format" (Mosak, 1958, p. 304). Up to a maximum number of three recollections could be requested. Pertinent questions directed at obtaining specific information for such variables as setting, significant others, age of subject, affective tone, and feelings associated with the memory would be used to guide the recounting of each recollection (Morawski and Brunhuber, 1993).

The family constellation, which is a "sociogram of the group at home during a person's formative years" (Dreikurs, 1952-53, p. 109), can affect an individual's reading development (Morawski, 1992). In order to learn about familial factors which have influenced teachers' current actions and views on reading instruction, an examination of their family constellations would be recommended. Focusing on their

siblings, teachers would respond to a series of questions aimed at disclosing their perceptions of their own reading abilities (Morawski, 1992). The rank ordering of siblings according to reading proficiency and their categorization by performance in the area of literacy are some of the specific kinds of data which teachers would supply. In the case of teachers who are only children, the questions used to obtain this information would be modified. For instance, before they provide specific answers, each of the teachers could be asked to imagine themselves being members of a family in which there are one or more siblings.

For both of the above procedures related to early recollections and family constellation, teachers would first record their answers in their journals. Then, on an individual basis or in small groups, they would examine their responses with the view to shedding light on their current behaviors and attitudes toward content area reading instruction (Morawski and Brunhuber, in press). This two-part process could be illustrated by the following hypothetical cases.

A teacher who conveys positive recollections acknowledges that her feelings of satisfaction and self-confidence are unintentionally interfering with her abilities to recognize and react to the literacy needs of her students, especially those who experience reading difficulties in specific subjects. Information obtained from an examination of her family constellation in relation to reading supports the above assessment. In particular, this teacher discloses that she would often become impatient when her brother's reading disability prevented him from discussing books with her.

Another teacher who communicates negative recollections has come to understand that his feelings of low self-confidence and discouragement are preventing him from making reading instruction a regular part of his daily classroom plans. An exploration of his family constellation reveals that he has always considered himself to be an ineffective reader in comparison to his two siblings who excelled in school. Consequently, as a student, he avoided activities which required more than a minimal amount of reading.

Teacher research. Teachers who conduct research in their classrooms "reflect about students' learning (and their own), inquire through multiple data sources (observation, analysis of artifacts, conferences, and the like), and then act on their new conclusions" (Patterson and Shannon, 1993, p. 8). Consequently, they are in an advantageous position "to make sense of their experience — to adapt a learning stance...toward classroom life" (Lytle and Cochran-Smith, 1990, p. 84).

Within the context of the affective component, there are numerous opportunities for teachers to clarify their views and enhance their instructional practices by engaging in research which can range from simple exercises to long-term studies. For instance, monitoring the successful implementation of a specific content reading strategy (Prater, 1990-91) in their classrooms can give teachers the confidence to begin using additional strategies to address the literacy needs of their students. Examples of other research opportunities are interviewing students about their viewpoints on reading (Osburn and Maddux, 1983) and carrying out a collaborative inquiry (Sagor, 1991) into the role of reading in a specific subject such as general science.

Two important ingredients of teacher research in this area, especially when it is a new endeavor, are collegial support and extensive use of reflective journals (Morris, Bopf, and Stewart-Dore, 1990). Using both small and large group sessions, members of a methods class can "serve as an

advisory board to help each [teacher] at each phase of the work—selecting a topic, stating explicitly what he or she already knows and wants to know in relation to the topic, designing ways to gather more information, and making sense of what is learned" (Evans, 1991, p. 11).

Conclusion and directions for future research

"The experience of becoming a teacher needs to be acknowledged for what it is, complex and demanding...personal development, in fact is an essential part of the teacher's preparation" (Fuller and Brown, 1969, p. 50). In the case of content teachers, the identification and examination of their beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to the reading process would be an essential step in their preparation for nurturing students' abilities to read. The affective component, which was introduced in this paper, provides an effective means by which this goal could be achieved.

For those methods instructors who are intending to integrate the affective component into their courses, it is highly recommended that they make regular use of expertise and support from a variety of areas such as library services, educational counseling, and special education. For example, a specialist in educational counseling could act as a guest facilitator for a session on bibliotherapy while a teacher education librarian could make recommendations regarding the most suitable fiction and nonfiction for enriching the study of specific subjects. Establishing a network with other methods instructors who are also addressing affective aspects of reading teacher education in their courses could provide a forum for learning about new applications and refining current ones.

In order to foster the evolvement of the affective component, research would need to be carried out. Recommendations for further inquiry, which would use both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, are included here: 1) conduct a case study of the implementation of the affective component. Include such data collection procedures as pre- and post-questionnaires, interviews, and observations of teachers' own classes to help determine if their attitudes, feelings, and behaviors have been modified by participating in the affective component; 2) as part of the above case study, obtain information regarding the course instructor's experiences with preparation, management, and evaluation related to the implementation of the affective component. Use a variety of data gathering instruments such as reflective journals and progress logs; 3) using a research team approach, study concurrent implementations of the affective component. Investigations can take place within the same teacher education program or they can occur in programs found at different institutions.

"Teachers who have a sense of control over their personal and professional environments are more effective" (Hunt, 1987, p. 14). This article presents an affective component which would enable content teachers to enhance their teaching by taking charge of the literacy events in their classrooms.

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