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Editor's Welcome

Preface

The publication of the Mediterranean Journal of Social & Behavioral Research (MJOSBR) is going to be an important contribution for social and behavioral sciences. This journal has emerged as a result of international collaboration among academic scholars throughout the world. The editorial board consists of different academics from many countries. We welcome submissions to bring international quality of MJOSBR. The strength of any good journal arises from interdisciplinary academic perspectives represented by the members of its editorial board. With the launching of our new publication, we invite readers to submit their manuscripts to the MJOSBR, and welcome all articles contributing to the improvement of social and behavioral sciences. We would like to thank to the editorial board of MJOSBR for their voluntary support. The Mediterranean Strategic Research Center is also a supporting association in collaboration with the journal which publishes books in the related fields. Please do not hesitate to send us your valuable comments and suggestions. The journal will publish refereed papers, book reviews and selected papers from conferences as well as special issues on up-to-date problematic topics. MJOSBR is a platform for exchanging views related to social, behavioral and educational research. We welcome authors with the warm senses of Mediterranean culture and share the common global ethical views of our academic world.

Best Regards

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Influential agents in the online education diffusion at a Mexican University: What the Social Network Analysis Reveals

Lewis McAnally-Salas¹, Mayer Cabrera Flores,

Javier Organista Sandoval, Gilles Lavigne

Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Mexico

Abstract

Through a Social Network Analysis applied to a survey at a Mexican University the diffusion of online education dynamics in a 13 year period was determined. For the analysis, the 13 years was divided into four periods. Teachers answered the survey by identifying by name the people or University initiatives, including people outside the University, which influenced his decision to venture into online education. The most influential agents for each period were determined by their In-Degree value. For the analysis, inter and intra periods influence of agents was considered. Three agents who held great influence in the diffusion in the most part of the period where identified, one of which kept the higher In-Degree value among teachers, and slightly lower than the node of University initiatives that promote online education. Is considered that the level of online learning diffusion in this University have been very limited without the influence of two influential agents in the overall process.

Keywords: Gephi Program, Innovation Diffusion, Online Learning, Social Network Analysis

¹ Correspondent Author: Lewis McAnally-Salas
E-mail address: mcanally@uabc.edu.mx.

1. Introduction

The vertiginous development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in recent decades has substantially transformed society as a whole. As a consequence of this development, authors such as Dolence and Norris (1995) speak about the transition of industry period to the information period. Likewise, organizations like World Bank (2002) and the OECD (1996) contemplate a new economy based on the knowledge which Higher Education Institutions (HEI) demand. (Malik, 2002) It is a change of paradigms in the teaching-learning processes promoted in México by the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) (2001) and the National Association of Universities and Institutes of Higher Education (ANUIES) (2000).

For HEI, the pressure of the external context to incorporate ICT in their educational and administrative processes has focused to turn substantial resources in infrastructure that are not always implemented for the best (McAnally-Salas, 2007). On the other hand; teachers have technologies which they can use in their teaching, but without a full understanding of how to use them effectively from an educational perspective.

In this context of technological growth, the Internet is a disruptive technology that has changed rapidly HEI daily lives, and it is precisely this ubiquity of Internet, what allows enrichment of teaching practices by facilitating transition to focus the educational process into learning. Although web tools, initially find their common use in distance education as a way of replacing limitations of interaction in traditional remote models, its utilization is not restricted to this educational modality (McLoughlin, 2000). In general we can say that in México, as in the whole world, the incorporation of Internet in HEI without a long tradition in distance education favored its incorporation and experimentation into the traditional modality as a complementary support (Mahony Wozniak, 2005) that evolved from the online course topics, and alternating the study of online content with one-to-one sessions (Belanger & Jordan, 2000; Horton & Horton, 2003) to make available complete courses on line ready to be taught via Internet.

Universidad Autónoma de Baja California (UABC) first researches related to online education started in 1996 with an acceptance, formalization and institutional support somewhat irregular over time (McAnally-Salas, 2007). Therefore, the aim of the work is focused on knowing the process of online educational dissemination in UABC in 1996-2009 period, as well as the general characteristics of teachers involved in such modality, their social networks for the design of their courses, and what are some of their beliefs about online education and some of their online teaching practices.

2. Method

The UABC teachers involved in online education were the subject of interest, and 4523 invitations were sent through institutional email obtained from UABC employs database. The purpose was for them to answer a survey, provided that the first questions were not intended for administrative staff and teachers whom were not involved in online education.

LimeSurvey system was used for design and application of the online surveys. This system allows exporting results in formats that make easier a subsequent manipulation into a spreadsheet.

The survey asked teachers to write down the year of involvement into the online teaching modality and the name of the person(s) responsible of their involvement in online education. The information was anonymous and registered in codes of two-letters and a number. The first letter from campus of origin and the second letter from the maximum level of education followed by a number.

The data obtained from involvement process into online education was coded and manipulated for its analysis as social networks in Gephi program.

3. Results

We obtained 324 valid surveys of the 4523 invitations that participate, because were the only ones fulfilling inclusion criteria into accurate analysis and teaching practices; and for dissemination process analysis we obtained 201 valid surveys. The survey was online for eight weeks and approximately every 15 days a reminder was sent to those who had not participated. Table 1.

Table 1. Number and percentage of teachers whom answered the survey.

Campus	Teachers by campus ²	Teachers involved in Online Education who answered the survey	Percentage who answered the survey
Ensenada	1238	124	10
Mexicali	2136	109	5
Tijuana	2050	85	4
Tecate and San Quintín	28	6	21

3.1. Online Education Diffusion Process

To analyze the responses of 201 teachers whom indicated the year that were involved in online education and mention to the person(s) that motivate them to get involved in this teaching modality, four periods were defined starting in 1996 until the end of the survey on December 2009. Periods go from 1996 to 1998, another from 1999 to 2002, also from 2003 to 2007, and 2008 to 2009. The periods correspond to four different administrative periods in UABC university, where the first and last ones include partial periods.

There are two essential data for the analysis: one is that a teacher has indicated the startup period and the other is that at least he has mentioned someone else, or that she or he has been mentioned by another teacher. The preceding creates two data groups; a first group that at least mention one teacher who responded to the survey indicating its initial period, and a second group that also mentions to other teachers of UABC or external teachers but the initial period is unknown, this includes mentions to institutional programs or employees involved in these programs.

By the nature of the question (to mention the person(s) that led you to get involved in online education) the generated networks are directed and the most important is the In-Degree.

This analysis is presented for periods that describe primarily the characteristics of the network in which only UABC teachers are involved with defined period and then, to describe the network including external agents, institutional programs and teachers of UABC whom have not their

² UABC. Annual Survey on Organizational Climate 2011. Encuesta anual. Cuadernos De Planeación y Desarrollo Institucional. Mexicali, Baja California: Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, April 2012.

period of involvement in the online education. In this analysis scheme will be incorporated the different periods as correspond.

3.1.1. 1996-1998 period

From the amount of teachers whom responded to the survey and say they have initiated in this period, there are 13 elements that make up a network with only 6 nodes connected by the influence of modality involvement as shown in Figure 1. In this group are identified in blue 10 teachers of Ensenada campus (E), 8 doctorate degree (D) and 2 persons with master's degree (M). 2 teachers in the Mexicali campus were recorded in red, one of them with a Master Degree and the other one with a Bachelor Degree (L), while only 1 teacher of Tijuana in green color with a master degree. In this figure are identified with an asterisk 3 nodes that are identified as responsible, in year 1996 of first studies of online education registered at the university; ED190, ED189 and ED191.

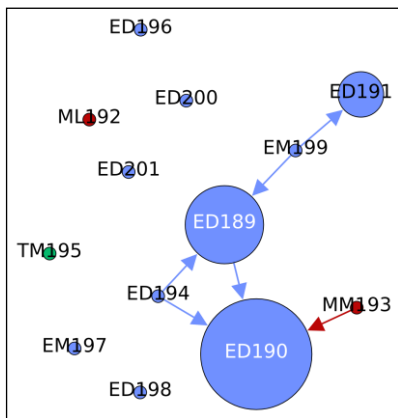


Figure 1. Teachers involved in online education between 1996 and 1998, the node size represents their relative importance to the network measured by their In-Degree value and colors define their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali and green for Tijuana.

The giant network component is formed by six nodes connected while the remaining are isolated. The average degree of linkage of the network is 0.462 with 6 links, 3 of them to ED190 node gives a In-Degree of 3, and defined as the most influential node of the period. The density of the non-directed graph is 0.055.

3.1.2. 1999-2002 period

In this period, 32 teachers are involved in online education with 15 links where there are 16 teachers of Mexicali, 6 Doctorates, 9 teachers and 1 person with a bachelor degree; in Ensenada we have 12 teachers, 8 Doctorates and 4 persons with a master degree; and from Tijuana we have 4 teachers, 3 with a Master Degree and one with a Bachelor Degree.

Figure 2 shows that the network has 3 components; the giant component of the network with 10 nodes and two additional components with 3 and 2 nodes. The most influential node of the period was the MD162 with an In-Degree of 5, followed by the node MM168 with an In-Degree of 3. In this case the density of the non-directed graph is 0.036.

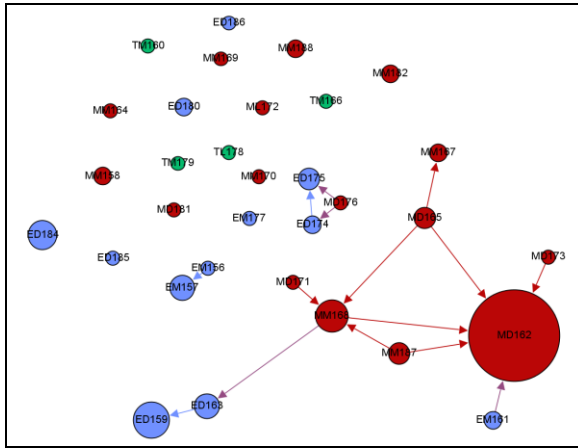


Figure 2. Teachers involved in online education between 1999 and 2002, the node size represents their relative importance to the network measured by their In-Degree value and colors define their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali and green for Tijuana.

3.1.3. 2003-2007 period

In this period there were 65 teachers who were involved in online education, but only 11 links are recorded. From this group 28 are from Mexicali, 9 Doctorates, 17 master's degree and 2 graduates. In Ensenada 19 teachers are incorporated, 8 Doctorates, 9 with a Master Degree and 2 graduates. In Tijuana 15 teachers, 4 Doctorates and 11 with a Master Degree while in Tecate; a teacher is incorporated and in San Quentin is incorporated one doctorate.

The 11 links cannot form a giant component when they are not concentrated in a few nodes; however the most influential nodes are those that have just a In-Degree of 2 corresponding to MM91 node of Mexicali and Tijuana TM94 node. The density of the non-directed graph is only 0.003.

3.1.4. 2008-2009 period

During this period of two years, 27 teachers were involved in online education, and because of the absence of links between them, it can be say that its influence to get involved into the online modality comes from agents of other periods.

This period incorporates 12 teachers of Ensenada, 4 Doctorates, 6 with a master's degree and 2 with a bachelor degree, Mexicali have 7 new teachers, 3 of them which have doctorate and 4 teachers with a master degree while in Tijuana are incorporated 8 teachers, 6 with a Master Degree and 2 with a bachelor degree. Obviously the not-directed graph density is 0.0.

3.2. Influences between periods

3.2.1. 1996 to 2002 period

The influence that exerted the teachers that adopted online education in the first period of 1996-1998 over the teachers that adopted online education in the next period, 1999-2002, can be seen in the Figure 3 where the node ED190, pioneer in 1996, it is the most influential node with an In-Degree value of 10 followed by the MD162 node.

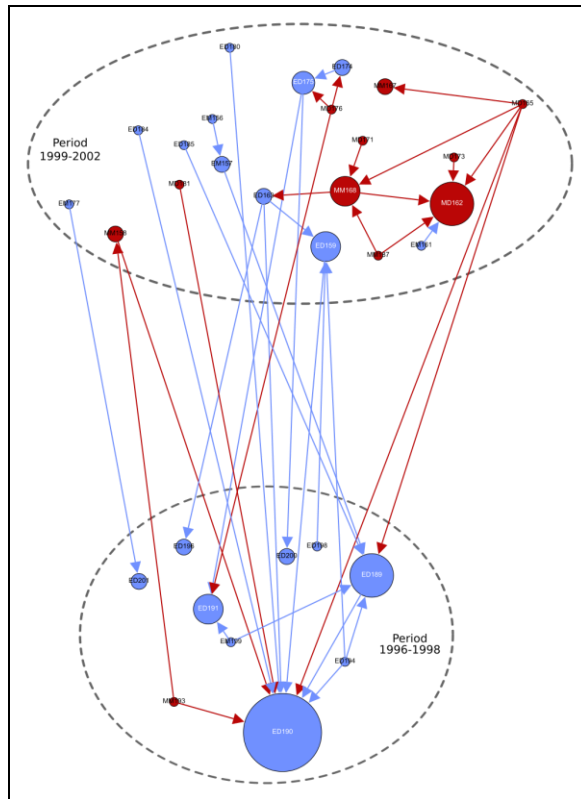


Figure 3. Links between teachers of the periods 1996-1998 and 1999-2002. The size of the nodes represents its importance to the network as its In-Degree; and colors indicate their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali, and green for Tijuana.

Due to the beginning of online education occurs in Ensenada, it is expected that their influence is relevant not only in the Ensenada campus, but in its distribution to other university campuses. So we can see from the first period in Ensenada that 6 of the 9 are mentioned as teachers that were influenced into involved in this modality. The links between Mexicali teachers becomes stronger in the second period.

This network have 31 nodes with 39 edges with a giant component with values similar to the whole network, 29 nodes, 93,55% of total nodes and 38 edges corresponding to the 97,44% of all edges in the network. The density of the non-directed graph is 0.084 indicating a very connected network between all its nodes.

3.2.2. 1996 to 2007 period

The influence that teachers had into the inter-and intra-periods from 1996 to 2002 can be seen in the Figure 4 where the most influential nodes remain the ED190 node of the first period and from the second period is MD162 node with an In-Degrees of 20 and 14 respectively . Teachers of the third period mention to 17 teachers of the first period and to 27 of the second period indicating a greater influence of the members of the second period over the third and the first period. Despite this, such individual nodes, the influence of ED190 node from the first period is substantially towards to the members of the third period as is shown by the links of the third period directed at this node. On the other hand it is evident the influence of MD162 node in the second period to the third period teachers.

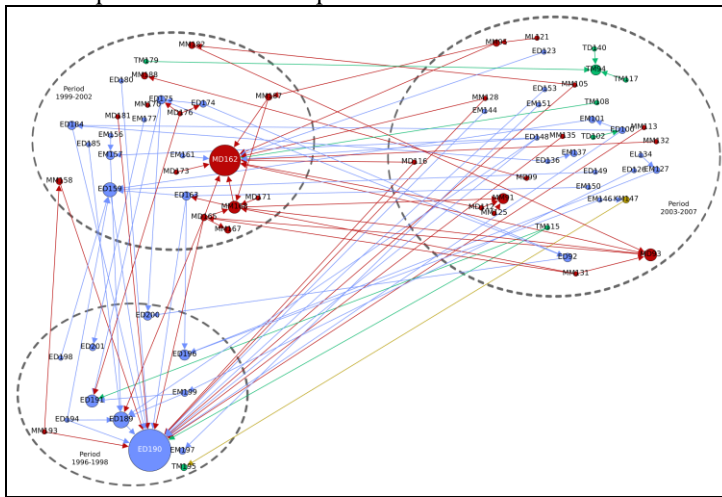


Figure 4. Links between teachers of the periods 1996 to 2002. The node size represents their relative importance to the network measured by their In-Degree value and colors indicate their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali and green for Tijuana.

For the third period, from 2003 to 2007, the MD93 node was the most influential with In-Degree of 4 and analyzing the figure shows that 3 of these In-Degrees comes from the previous period , which suggesting that their influence was accentuated during the third period, possibly influenced by the MD162 node of the second period.

These three periods form a network of 73 nodes and 95 links with a giant component of 63 nodes, 86.3% of the total, and 89 links which correspond to 93.68% of the total. The density of the non-directed graph is 0.018

3.2.3. 1996 to 2009 period

The Figure 5 shows the links of inter-and intra influence of periods that teachers had from 1996 to 2009. The two most influential nodes are repeated from prior periods the ED190 node of the first period and MD162 node from the second period with In-Degrees of 24 and 18 respectively. While into the third period the most influential node is the MD93 with a In-Degree

of 5. The teachers of the fourth period have mentioned to 10 teachers of the first period, 11 teachers of the second period and only 6 of the third period.

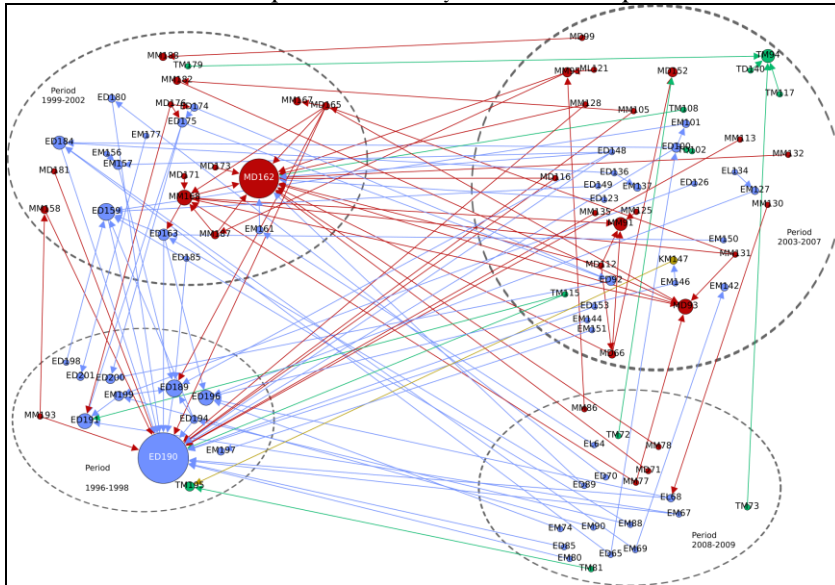


Figure 5. Links between teachers in the periods from 1996 to 2009. The node size represents their relative importance to the network measured by their In-Degree value and colors indicate their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali, green for Tijuana and gold for Tecate (K).

This network has 96 nodes and 126 links with a giant component of 85 nodes which is the 88.54% of all the nodes, and 119 links that corresponding to the 94.44% of links of the network and a density of the non-directed graph of 0.028.

3.2.4. Periods and agents without a starting period reported

The influence of all the registered agents is shown in Figure 6 that corresponds to a network with 185 nodes and 259 links with a giant component of 157 nodes and 241 links which corresponding to 84.86% and 93.05% of the total respectively. The density of the non-directed graph is 0.015. This figure shows the influence of institutional programs in the node of UABC and external agents to the university into the External node. The most influential node considering all periods, is the UABC node with a value of 29 in its In-Degree, followed by ED190 node of the first period with a value of 27, the MD162 node of the second period with a value of 21 and External node with a value of 13 In-Degree.

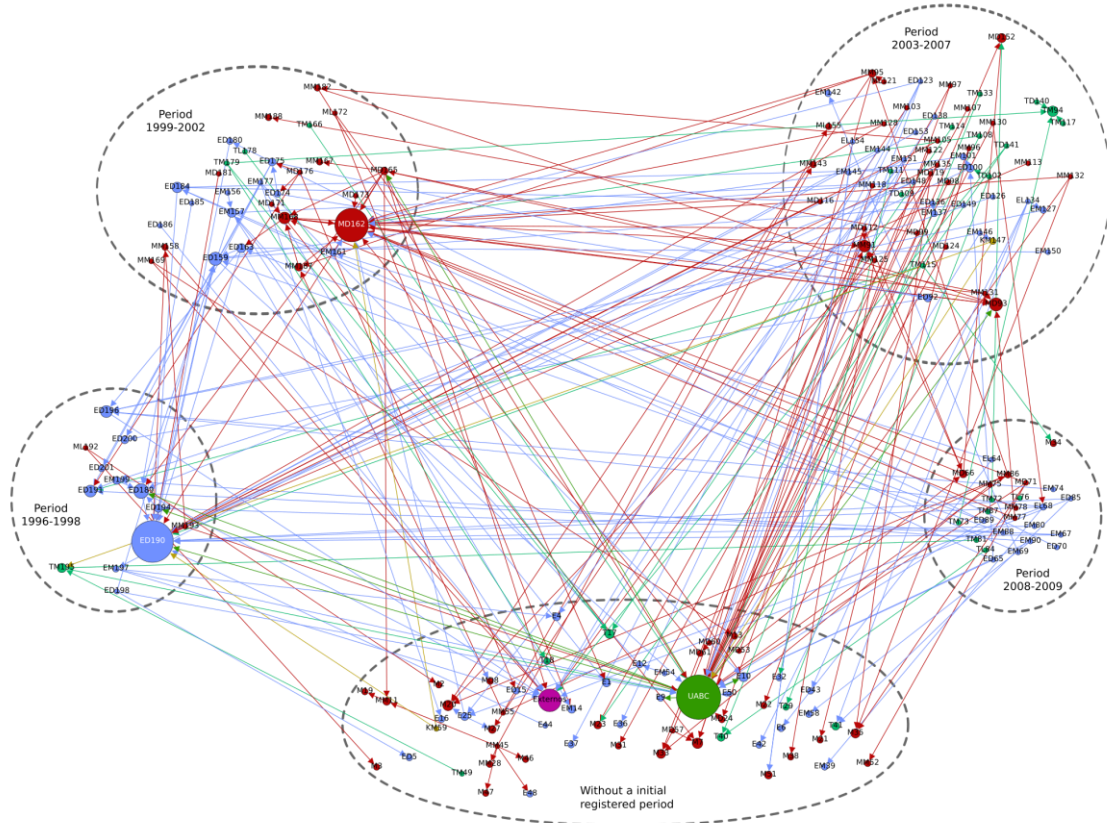


Figure 6. Links between teachers in all periods and agents which its period of involvement is unknown. The node size represents their relative importance to the network measured by their In-Degree value and colors indicate their Campus; blue for Ensenada, red for Mexicali, green for Tijuana, gold for Tecate (K), dark green for UABC and purple for External agents.

Considering the intensity of links between the five networks, we can observe a higher intensity between the agent network without a defined period and teachers of the third period with 52 links followed by the second period from where emerge 29 links, the teachers of fourth period has 18 links and finally the first period with 17 links. This implies that agents without a defined period provide 116 of the 259 links that make up the totality, the 44.78%.

4. Discussion

The results indicate that the online education diffusion in the UABC has been more a gradual process with an unclear purposes. It has responded to a series of individual efforts, rather than an explicitly and clearly oriented institutional policy. Besides, its behavior changes as frequently as administrative periods of the university. Thus, in each administrative period the diffusion of online education behaved differently.

Initially the online education diffusion in UABC was started by individual initiatives undertaken by academics who perceived it as a complementary alternative to conventional

university education. Thus, the period 1996-1998 was characterized by the emergence of agents of change, which not only started to practice in this modality, but stimulated the interest of other academics. In this way, the influence of these agents led to the gestation of small communities (sub-networks), whose members shared information on their practices and experiences from their involvement in online education. This dynamics resulted in the offer of the first bachelor's and master's degree online courses, the implementing of workshops for teachers interested in the modality, and a proposal to UABC authorities for the creation of a Distance Education area in the university.

The first stage results stimulated that the institution, in the next administrative period (1999-2003) take a more active role in the online education's dissemination process, implementing some strategies, such as: 1) the incorporation of an strategic program for Online Education in the UABC; 2) the design and implementation of the Open and Distance Learning System; and 3) the in-licensing of Virtual-U has the LMS of choice at that time. However, in this same period is pending the formal incorporation in the university structure, of the proposed area for Distance Education. Besides the technological factor it is privileged over pedagogy.

This series of strategies, added to the inertia of the first stage, achieved that the network of this period increase in its number of nodes. Thus, to the 13 academic participants in the first period were joined by 32 academics, which resulted in the emergence of other change agents whose influence led to the articulation of new sub-networks and new positions of power.

The arrival of the third administrative period (2003-2007), brought a clear and structured focus around the use of ICT as a means of teaching and learning. However, its implementation was not carried out as originally conceived. The incipient groups around online education from previous periods were reassigned, and the design and implementation of the system in a major scale, were disrupted. However, in 2006 some change agents in a position of power manage to create the Open Education Center (OEC). As part of their first actions was to initiates a new campaign to involve academics into online education.

Such a scenario modified the evolving dynamics of online education into the UABC as during this third period the increase in the number of nodes was remarkable. At 45 participants from 1996 to 2002, they were joined by 65 new academics where involved in the online education modality. It is reasonable to assume that this growth was the result of the natural inertia of the first two periods and the actions taken by the OEC at the end of the third cycle. Moreover, in the network, the UABC appears as a dominant node for the first time, because along this period many of those involved indicate that UABC was the agent that influence them to get involved in online education, probably because of the actions defined by the OEC.

Finally, in 2008-2009, the new university administration does not define a clear policy regarding online education, this could explain why a significant drop in new participants was recorded into the incorporation of new participants in contrast with the 2003-2007 period. Only 27 new teachers were involved in online education, and no emergence of new agents of change and new sub-networks where registered. However, another important factor to consider is the fact that in the last period, only data from the first two years where obtained, so the number of new nodes incorporated is unknown for the complete period.

The trend that detects the dissemination of online education along these four periods suggests the need to clearly define a institutional policy and strategy to promote the online education potential in the university context. This policy, beyond of establishing guidelines and regulatory standards, should create the conditions for the diffusion of online education in a natural way throughout university and to encourage the emergence of changing agents within the own

university community, who in addition to encouraging the adoption of this type of education are also able to identify new tendencies and niche of opportunities.

Encouraging the emerging of changing agents within the university, would create a more strong and distributed network that would allow online education maintain continuity in adverse contexts and that proper operation did not depend significantly on a small number of nodes. In turn, having a large number of agents of change stimulates the formation of communities that promote diversity of ideas and flow through the network, a fundamental element of any innovation process.

Finally, to rescue of previous experiences during this diffusion process is a valuable source of information that allows you to identify good practices and avoid to replicating those that do not contribute to the positioning of online education as a element of innovation and change in the institution.

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Views and Perceptions of Senior Early Childhood Education Students Regarding Inclusive Education and Disability

Evdoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou^{*}, Athina Zoniou-Sideri,

Nadia Lampropoulou, Lia Tsermidou

*Faculty of Early Childhood Education, School of Education,
National and Kapodistrian University of Athens,
10680 Athens, Greece*

Abstract

Inclusive education is increasingly being adopted as the most appropriate framework for organizing educational, but also social and political systems both in Europe and worldwide. Pedagogical departments around the world, converging on sociopolitical trends internationally, have introduced a series of actions aimed at promoting the concept of inclusive education and relevant issues in their curriculum. This research aims to map prevailing attitudes and opinions about disability in a population that is on the borderline between completion of their higher education studies and the gradual familiarity with the educational reality through internships. The main objectives of this research are to monitor and study the views and perceptions of senior Early Childhood Education students on inclusive education and disability and to solicit feedback from students about the curriculum of the Department of Early Childhood Education (DECE), National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, in regard to inclusive education.

Keywords: Disability, Early Childhood, Higher Education, Inclusive education

^{*} Corresponding author: Evdoxia Nteropoulou-Nterou
E-mail address: ederou@ecd.uoa.gr

1. Introduction

The importance of teacher attitudes for the success of inclusive education has been widely reported (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Sharma et al, 2009) and the findings from self-reported and observed practice provide evidence of the impact of teacher beliefs and attitudes (Stanovich and Jordan, 1998) on the success of inclusive education. Furthermore, as McLean (2008) argues, challenging university students to examine their attitudes towards disabled people is an ethical responsibility for tertiary institutions and, as previous research has shown, there is a clear connection between pre-service teacher views and attitudes and instructional practice.

This study aims to explore the perceptions of students on inclusive education and disability, as the latter can decisively determine the scope for action, change and evolution of educational interventions adopted in educational practice. These perceptions are the outcome of many factors and do not only emanate from the university's educational environment. On the contrary, students' experiences and the prevailing socio-political conditions play an essential role in their beliefs and attitudes towards disability (Zoniou-Sideri et al., 2005; Zoniou-Sideri & Vlachou, 2006).

2. Methodology

This study adopts a combined methodological approach. The main advantage of such an approach lies in the degree of depth and the holistic approach of issues related to the topic under examination (Cohen & Manion, 2007; Mason 2002). The mixed methodological research design provides all the benefits of research data and research methods triangulation, which are necessary in educational research since the teaching-learning process is so complex that a single-method approach would yield limited and sometimes misleading findings (Cohen & Manion, 2007).

Therefore, in the context of a mixed research design and in order to meet the objectives of the survey, research tools both from the field of quantitative and qualitative research were employed for the collection of research data. More specifically, the research project used: a standard questionnaire in order to collect comparable and analyzable data through statistical data analysis methods; a semi- structured interview aiming at a thorough examination and analysis of the data; finally, content and discourse analysis of reports on differentiated educational interventions of students implemented during their internships.

The questionnaire was completed by 200 students during the academics year 2012-13 and 2013-14, the majority of whom were in their final year of undergraduate studies (85.0%). The questions focused on the following areas: relationship with special education, aims and general principles of inclusion, the conceptual context of inclusion, social attitudes towards diversity, barriers to inclusive education, the role of the inclusive educationalist, debt crisis and inclusive education, special conditions of inclusion, establishment of inclusive values and general assessment of inclusion.

Seventy two (72) senior students participated in the semi-structured interviews. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes, allowing time for an in-depth exploration of the students' views regarding specific parameters, which were also examined in the questionnaire.

All the students participating in the interviews had also attended an internship course in the university on differentiated pedagogy and were asked to record in writing the inclusive practices

they adopted in the classroom activities they designed, organised and implemented. The students worked in pairs during the internship and while drafting their final essay.

Data analysis of the students' interviews and essays was based on the method of thematic content analysis. Data processing and analysis of the questionnaires was based on the statistical package SPSS 21 for social sciences and the techniques of descriptive statistics.

3. Research outcomes

This paper focuses on a single aspect that emerged from the data analysis and was present in all three phases of the research: the conceptual definition of inclusion, as understood and implemented by the students.

3.1. Questionnaire

The majority of students agree that disabled students should attend general (or mainstream) school settings. According to the participants' answers inclusive education aims to eliminate all forms of educational exclusion, it concerns all students and places under negotiation the dominant architecture of school attendance. In addition, inclusion signifies the equal treatment of all students and educational staff, the participation of all students in the learning procedure, a battle against all barriers to learning for all students. Students also declare that inclusion means struggle with the aim to change the existing structures, transition from a welfare model to a model of equal opportunities and rights, acceptance of diversity, review of the values and general aims of education.

Table 1. At the level of proclamations

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The disabled student should attend general school	5 (2.5%)	13 (6.5%)	41 (20.5%)	93 (46.5%)	48 (24.0%)
Inclusive education concerns all students	3 (1.5%)	6 (3.0%)	13 (6.5%)	78 (39.0%)	100 (50.0%)
Inclusive education places under negotiation the dominant architecture of school attendance	2 (1.0%)	12 (6.0%)	37 (18.5%)	101 (50.5%)	47 (23.5%)
Inclusive education ensures the participation of all students in the school	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.5%)	7 (3.5%)	112 (56.0%)	75 (37.5%)
Inclusion means acceptance of diversity	2 (1.0%)	5 (2.5%)	4 (2.0%)	67 (33.5%)	122 (61.0%)

Students believe that it is very or extremely important to organise learning in an inclusive environment with the aim to promote the active participation of all students in the learning process.

It is also very or extremely important for the teaching staff to work towards removing all forms of restriction from the educational process for all students and towards the limitation of discrimination practices and the promotion of equality between students.

Table 2. At the level of proclamations

	Unimportant	Of little importance	Important	Very important	Extremely important
The organization of learning in inclusive education should promote the active participation of all students in the learning	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	9 (4.5%)	64 (32.0%)	125 (62.5%)
Inclusive education presupposes that teaching staff aims to remove restrictions of students in the educational process	1 (0.5%)	5 (2.5%)	11 (5.5%)	83 (41.5%)	97 (48.5%)
Inclusive education presupposes limiting discrimination practices	0 (0.0%)	5 (2.5%)	17 (8.5%)	68 (34.0%)	110 (55.0%)

Even though the students in previous questions agreed that inclusion concerns all students and that the disabled students should attend general education settings, at the point in the questionnaire, where the line of questioning becomes more specific, the majority of students agree that students with mild disabilities are the only ones that can easily meet the requirements of the general school and they consider the degree and type of disability as the main obstacle to inclusion. Students continue by stating that the presence of a special educator in the classroom is necessary in order for the student to be able to respond to the requirements of the general school.

Finally when the students are called upon to answer questions specifically oriented towards the conditions or prerequisites of inclusion, they agree that it is highly important to be able to prevent learning difficulties, to ensure the early identification and detection of disabilities and the cooperation with diagnostic committees for the prevention and early diagnosis of disabilities and special educational needs.

Table 2. Contradictions

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The disabled student can easily meet the general school requirements if he has a mild disability	7 (3.5%)	44 (22.0%)	45 (22.5%)	92 (40.0%)	10 (5.0%)
The disabled student requires the presence of a special educator	6 (3.0%)	29 (14.5%)	51 (25.5%)	82 (41.0%)	32 (16.0%)
The disabled student requires the presence of an educator who specializes in matters of disability diagnosis	13 (6.5%)	32 (16.0%)	45 (22.5%)	78 (39.0%)	32 (16.0%)
In the context of early childhood general educational settings it is necessary to prevent learning difficulties	5 (2.5%)	26 (13.0%)	44 (22.0%)	90 (45.0%)	33 (16.5%)
In the context of early childhood general educational settings it is necessary to identify and detect disabilities early	2 (1.0%)	15 (7.5%)	28 (14.0%)	95 (47.5%)	59 (29.5%)
In the context of early childhood general educational settings it is necessary to provide special education	10 (5.0%)	48 (24.0%)	51 (25.5%)	64 (32.0%)	24 (12.0%)
In the context of early childhood general educational settings it is necessary to cooperate with diagnostic committees for the prevention and early diagnosis of disabilities and special educational needs.	6 (3.0%)	20 (10.0%)	35 (17.5%)	97 (48.5%)	40 (20.0%)

3.2. Interviews

At the level of proclamations the participating students agree that inclusion concerns *all students* because it is directly connected to the notion of diversity: all students are different and hence all classrooms in today's schools are heterogeneous. They further state that since *all classrooms are heterogeneous, inclusion concerns both special and general education teachers*. All educators *need to acknowledge and accommodate/foster diversity*. Furthermore, all educators need to adopt the philosophy of inclusion not only in theory but also in practice. Each educationalist should be committed to carefully observing and taking into consideration the individual characteristics, wishes, experiences, interests and preferences of all students and proceeding accordingly to the design and implementation of teaching practice. The role of the inclusive educator is to promote inclusion, all students' active participation and engagement, to provide motivations and incentives and to create an educational setting for all students. Thus, the ultimate aim of inclusive education is for students not to be excluded from general education and for disabled students, in specific, not to be separated from and marginalized by their peers when they are in general education classrooms. As main barriers to inclusion the students identify the

negative attitudes towards diversity and the philosophy of inclusion; low expectations, stereotypical prejudice, and the lack of confidence in students, the traditional teacher-centered teaching and learning practices and the lack of teachers' education in inclusion.

Despite the students' proclamations that inclusion concerns all students and aims towards all students' active involvement and participation in a shared learning environment, when they were asked specifically which educational setting they consider as the most appropriate for the disabled students, the majority of the participants expressed the opinion that disabled students can attend general education settings only under certain conditions. To support their argument the senior students stress the explanation that general education classrooms are not the most appropriate school settings for the education of students with severe disabilities, without though being able to define the meaning of "severe" disability.

"I believe that it depends on the diagnosis (...) if it is a severe type of disability he or she might need special help" (1a).

"It is a problem if she can't follow, not even a little bit, what the other children can do, I don't know... it seems difficult" (1b).

Moreover, special schools are considered as the most appropriate educational setting since they appoint special educators, who have the appropriate training and specialization to support disabled students, whereas within general education settings teachers tend to marginalize and exclude students with disabilities. More often than not, in general schools specialized educational staff is absent whereas special schools are fully equipped and prepared to meet the needs of the disabled students with the appropriate resources, access and equipment.

"We had an autistic child in the classroom, and I don't know if that student would be better if she was in a special school... but the fact remains that she didn't do anything in the classroom all day long besides placing and replacing cubes and balls in a row" (2a).

"Basically I believe in inclusion, but as we observed in the kindergartens that we attended during our internships, general schools do not value difference. Educators do not provide students with the space they need. And there is the issue of accessibility; of course the school that we were had a ramp for the students to get in but, other than that, they don't support students" (5b).

"And the educational practices used is another issue. They don't take students into account. For example, we had a child that did not understand the Greek language and we could see that he did not participate since he could not understand and the teachers' response was 'but he doesn't understand. What can I do?' Maybe that student should go somewhere else as no one helped him in the general school" (5a).

We should note another interesting point, which also highlights the issue under discussion; students feel confident to stress the importance of inclusion but, in practice, their reflections are contradictory once asked if they consider themselves as inclusive educators; the majority of students are then reluctant to provide a positive answer. They claim that it depends on the severity and the type of disability, the specific cases of disabled students in their classrooms and that they feel they need additional practical knowledge and experience.

"Inclusive education is a way of life and it is very difficult for a single teacher to achieve it; it requires a lot of observation and research" (2_6b).

"Inclusion is very difficult in practice; we have struggled a lot, because we needed to keep in mind all the needs that our students had and all their

skills and it is very difficult when you have 20 students to know everything, what their abilities and what their needs are or what they like. It takes time; I don't know" (2_3 α).

3.3. Essays

The final essays submitted by the senior students at the end of their internship in real-time school environments included clearly defined aims based on the principles of inclusive education and in the light of differentiated pedagogy. The main objectives included:

- The active participation, involvement and empowerment of all students during the process of planning, implementation and assessment of learning activities.
- Interaction, cooperation and group work.
- Activities based on former experiences, needs and interests of all children with a communicative motivation for all students.
- Activities of a multi-sensory character

The contradictions appear when the students implement the activities and two trends can be detected: a focus on the smooth implementation of the activity and a fear that it might diverge from the original planning while, in addition, an almost exclusive concentration on cognitive goals can be observed. As a result, the activities are rigid, and allow no flexibility during the phase of implementation.

“Our main goal is for all the children in the classroom to pay attention to what we have planned for them and not to dismiss it” (e7b:13).

Regarding the active participation and involvement of students it was evident in most essays that the children carry out the instructions of the senior students and that for the most part the activities take place in the discussion circle area where the children are asked to answer specific preset questions. Therefore, the children's involvement is limited to whether they have actually followed and implemented the indicated activities and instructions, without objections, without leaving the group, without complaining, without refusing to follow orders and without making mistakes.

“The most encouraging thing is that the children sat for very long time in the discussion circle area, they were quiet and remained there and in their tables also for a long period of time and they followed willingly our instructions despite their potential fatigue” (e2a:12).

In addition, it seems that the senior students confuse the notion of “all students”, as it virtually becomes equivalent with the “majority of pupils”. The following excerpt from an essay illustrates exactly this point:

“Generally the implementation of the activity progressed as we had anticipated [in the stage of design the activity aimed at all pupils' active participation and aimed at maintaining the interest of all students] and only five children did not participate at all, three of whom were hyperactive during the entire storytelling. These children were enrolled in the inclusive classroom (...)” (e2b:14).

Concerning the assessment process, theoretical inconsistency in terms of methodological design was observed. The original aim of the university students, as described in the essays, was to conduct the final assessment of the educational process with the children; nevertheless, in most cases the children were not involved in the assessment process and when involved they were asked to answer specific and predefined sets of statements (i.e. I enjoyed reading this fairy tale/I

did not enjoy reading this fairy tale, I liked it when we danced/ I didn't like it when we danced, etc.) or by conducting a type of voting procedure concerning which activity they enjoyed the most. In the whole process, children's personal reflection was absent and so were the opportunities for free expression. Even the way in which the assessment process was implemented raises concerns as it is based primarily on verbal interaction.

The multi-sensory character of the activities was also limited, as the students felt that they had taken into consideration this parameter by simply with introducing tools, such as puppets, music and movement. Also the theoretical framework was absent from the design and the implementation of the activities.

In relation to team work, the majority of the activities took place in the discussion circle area, in whole-class sessions where interaction and dialogue was restricted to teacher-student exchanges and, to a lesser extent, involved student-to-student discussions; even more, in the work tables each child performed their own single work (painting, arts and crafts, activity sheets).

“The children are divided into groups depending on what they want to build and they sit at their tables so that everyone can make their own construction...”

The most characteristic phrase used in the essays to mark the beginning of each activity is the one where the children gather in the discussion circle area”

“We gather the children in the discussion circle area and we begin talking...”

“While the children are in the discussion circle area...”

“In the end we gathered again in the discussion area...”

“We encourage the children to sit in the discussion area and we sit in the centre...”

“Initially we sit in the discussion area...”

A key concern of the senior students was for all the children to sit in the discussion area and there are many references in their essays concerning their attempts to achieve this goal or their efforts to bring children back to the discussion area.

“We made several attempts to convince the child to participate in the discussion; despite our efforts he sat for a while in the discussion area and then again he moved away and we did not manage to bring him back. He did not respond either to our calls or to his inclusive teacher's call who intervened at that point” (e3a:10).

Finally, in terms of the topic selection and the design and planning the documentation in the essays was incomplete and often almost non-existent concerning the selection criteria and/or the steps and reflections that led the students to choose a specific topic. In all the essays the topic was announced in the introduction and few were the exceptions where the students provided specific details of their rationale.

Conclusion

A general overall conclusion from the data analysis suggests that the students underline the value of inclusive philosophy, but at the same time they exhibit inconsistency between theory and practice. Thus, it appears that the students clinging to the notion of normality use politically correct reasoning and their studies in pedagogical university departments shield this rigid way of thinking. This study has been a springboard for feedback and assessment of the opportunities provided towards the direction of inclusive education, through the courses offered by the Early Childhood Education Department, University of Athens. In this light, the main concern emerging from the results of this research focuses on the way that the offered teachers' education could be differentiated; more specifically, what changes or additions are crucial in order to provide an appropriate educational context where prospective educators could analyse in depth the issues of inclusive education, become aware of the meaning of "difference" and "diversity" and move beyond the level of theoretical postulates; to find the appropriate processes that will help and support future teachers to familiarize themselves with the process of self-reflection and to reinforce the role of inclusive educators with regard to the adoption of inclusive practices.

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MJSBR

Quality and Cost/Benefit Analysis of Distance Education: A Case Study at Karadeniz Technical University

Muhammet Berigel*

*Distance Education Research and Application Center
Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon, Turkey*

Abstract

Karadeniz Technical University Distance Education Research and Application Center (KTU-DERAC) has 5 Master Degree Program, 2 Graduate Program and 4 courses with approximately 20.000 students. Quality and cost in distance education have been considered and evaluated by university and Higher Education Institution. Quality and cost analysis studies are held on yearly and distance education policies are composed and shaped regarding results. At this study, quality and cost analyze studies between September 2010 and June 2014. Problems, achievements, benefits and strategies are detailed and presented with changes over time. Student's success, comfort, expectations, supports; instructors' performance, comfort, expectations, supports; university management's expectations, KTU-DERAC staffs' performance, comfort, expectations are regarded for analyzing quality. Cost/ Benefit analyses has been made regarding budget, expenses, investments over the years. Quality and cost/benefit relation is also discussed at this study. Results of study showed that experiences, investments, student's and instructors' comfort and expectations are key factors for success of distance education.

Keywords: Cost/Benefit, Distance Education, Quality

* Corresponding author: Muhammet Berigel
E-mail address: berigel@ktu.edu.tr

1. Introduction

Distance education in the Turkey has experienced a lot of important changes in the last ten years that have changed traditional model of education. Number of University has increased from 90 to 160 in last ten years. Number of student not attending universities because of some problems like budget, university fees, accommodation and transportation has decreased. Government increased university capacities and opened new departments and programs at each university. At the dimension of that grow some problems like insufficient classroom, budget and instructor have appeared at Higher Education in Turkey. Politics of government increased number of students at graduate level but working people's education needs has not been solved. To meet that needs new modes for higher education have been developed and distance education was used for most powerful method. Universities started to integrate distance education courses in the curriculum and some courses are conducted with distance education. Rate of distance education courses are between %1 to %20 in universities at Turkey. Also to solve education needs of working people new distance education programs were opened. Universities and students solved a lot of problems using distance education. However, at the other part of this situation, quality of courses and its assurance appeared an important problem at distance education. Quality assurance is not specific for distance education; it is a big factor for all education activities in Higher Education. But in distance education, as a new method, it is an important indicators for choosing distance education.

There are a lot of factors that affect to quality and quality assurance in distance education. Clarke identified three important areas for quality assurance, curriculum and its assessment, handling of coursework and assignments and liaison with the students. (Clarke and oth, 2004). But Clarke also mentioned that there is no one area of distance learning that can be singled out for supplying quality assurance and all aspects of the distance courses must be evaluated and teachers, managers, staff and especially students must be satisfied. Appropriate technology is another factor for quality, choosing appropriate technologies and software will lead increasing quality. Choosing correct technology can solve adoption problems of members (Berge, 2002). Wang in his study defined quality factors at 5 factors; Learning outcome assessment, Curriculum and instructional development, Institutional commitment, student support and faculty support (Wang ,2006).

2. KTU-DERAC Analyses Between 2010 to 2014

KTU DERAC's first online program started at 2010 at the area of management of education at master degree level. One master program with 100 students was first distance education facilities of KTU-DERAC. In five years 5 master degree program,1 graduate program and 2 vocational high school program with 942 students and 5 courses given with distance education with 24.680 students were capacity of KTU-DERAC. As number shows there was a big expanding demand and tendency to distance education. Table-1 shows number of students and programs between 2010 and 2014.

Table 1. Number of students and programs between 2010 to 2013

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of Programs	1	4	6	7	8
Number of Course conducted with distance education	-	-	4	4	5
Students in programs	100	470	678	843	942
Student in Courses	-	-	16867	19.454	24680

Courses conducted with distance education are compulsory courses of Turkish Higher Education System. These courses are Turkish Language I, Turkish Language II , History of Revolution and Ataturk' s Principles I, History of Revolution and Ataturk' s Principles II and Application Of Basic Information Technologies courses. Also there are a lot of students in distance education programs. One of the most important quality issues in distance education is student's satisfaction and easy use of distance education system. Table 2 shows systems integrated in distance education for students between 2010 and 2014 at KTU-DERAC.

Table 2. Systems integrated in distance education for students between 2010 and 2014

	Content Delivery	Learning Management Systems	Content Management Systems	Student Support Services
2010	Recorded live classes Videos	Moddle	Adobe Connect	Phone, email.
2011	Recorded live classes Videos	Moddle	Adobe Connect	Phone, email, online students support system
2012	Recorded live classes Video Interactive educational material, lecture notes, online exams	Moddle Adobe Connect Trainer Module	Adobe Connect Moddle	Phone, email, online students support system, forum
2013	Recorded live classes Video Interactive educational material, lecture notes, online exams, animations,	Moddle Adobe Connect Trainer Module	Adobe Connect Moddle	Phone, email, online students support system, forum, Student evaluation forms
2014	Recorded live classes Video Interactive educational material, lecture notes, online exams, animations,	Moddle Adobe Connect Trainer Module	Adobe Connect Moddle	Phone, email, online students support system, forum, Student evaluation forms

Content is one of the most important factor for supplying quality issue in terms of academic achievement, student's motivation and satisfaction. Kinds of content delivery increased over to time between 2010 and 2014. Using different types of student support services help to students to contact with related department for their assistance needs. (Stella and Gnaam, 2004) Increasing number and type of content increased student's success. Rate of success at courses given by distance education was shown table 3.

Table 3. Success rate of students at distance education courses between 2012 and 2014

Year	Success Rate
2012	%78
2013	%82
2014	%86

Distance education composed an important profit for university budget. Using distance education for compulsory 5 courses having 11 credit at total supplied university supplied 450.000 \$ for each year and departments have chance to use classrooms for another courses at % 10 rate. Also electricity, maintenance, cleaning and security payments decreased around %10. Another important contribution of using distance education for 3 compulsory courses for first grade graduate students helped to earn and develop graduate students' lifelong learning skills. At that point university management has been aware of profits and advantages of using distance education in a short time.

Instructor at distance education system is another important factor for evaluating quality in distance education. Instructor earned more money at distance education courses.(Quilter and Weber, 2004) That also motivated to instructor to give distance education courses. Also quality of instructor support systems increased motivation and distance education skills and experiences of instructors. Table 4 shows change of instructor support system facilities between 2010 and 2014.

Table 4. Instructor Support systems and Number of Instructor between 2010 and 2014

Year	Instructor Support Systems	Number of Instructor in Distance Education Systems.
2010	Detailed user manual	5
	Online videos about system use	
	Call Center	
2011	Detailed user manual	24
	Online videos about system use	
	Call Center	
2012	Technical Assistance	49
	Detailed user manual	
	Online videos about system use	
	Call Center	
2013	Technical Assistance	67
	Orientation programs	
	Detailed user manual	
	Online videos about system use	

2014	Call Center	75
	Technical Assistance	
	Orientation programs	
	Online Support Systems	
	Detailed user manual	
	Online videos about system use	
	Call Center	
	Technical Assistance	
Orientation programs		
Online Support Systems		

Distance education requires experienced staff to complete tasks, to organize and manage distance education. Skills and experience of staff determines growth speed of distance education and quality of distance education. Staff comfort, expectations and performance is another important factor determining quality of distance education. Staffs are at the center of distance education activities and must give support to other components of distance education like instructors and students. Growth and profit of distance education in KTU-DERAC increased earns of staff, developed their skills and experiences related with distance education and composes profession satisfaction. Table 5 shows number of staff, Staff education program of staff, and composed work groups

Table 5 Staff information between 2010 and 2014

Year	Number of Staff		Education programs completed by staff	Composed Work Groups
	Full Time	Part Time		
2010	7	-	Learning Management Systems Content Management Systems Students and Instructor Support Systems Budget and Management	Learning Management Systems Group Budget Group Management Group Technical Group
2011	8	3	Content Design and Development	Content Development Group
2012	10	5	Content Design and Development	Learning Management System Development Group Financial Management Group
2013	13	10	Quality Assurance	Students Affair Group Teacher Support Group
2014	14	8	Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance Group

Using capable and new technologies is a key factor to increase quality in distance education. Following and integrating new technologies to distance education can solve lots of problems at

distance education. Table 6 shows technologies integrated to distance education between 2010 and 2014.

Table 6. Technology innovation and investment at KTU DERAC between years of 2010 and 2014

Year	Hardware	Software
2010	Smart Board ,Server, Personal Computers,	Live Classroom Software: Adobe Connect, Development Software: Adobe Flash, Dreamweaver, Photoshop Learning Management System: Moodle
2011	Drawing Board, Smart Pen, Smart Phones, Data Center	Development Software: Adobe Captivate, Presenter
2012	Server Upgrade, Media Casting Device	E-learning Development: Raptivity
2013	Haptic Devices, Video Cameras,	Learning Management System: KTU LMS
2014	Live Casting Device	Web Casting: DigiLab

Using new hardware helped to instructor to enrich teaching activities in classrooms. Also increasing capacity of servers and development device helped KTU-DERAC's staff to develop and design better products. Using new and practical software increased capacity and components of content ((Marshall and Mitchell, 2006).

In five years at KTU-DERAC a lot of investments and innovation completed. Incomes and expenses rate of distance education is accepted an important indicator for distance education in terms of both quality and development and management policies. Table 7 shows incomes and expenses of distance education between 2010 and 2014.

Table 7. Incomes and expenses of KTU-DERAC between 2010 to 2014

Year	INCOME		EXPENSES
	STUDENT'S FEE	PROJECTS	
2010	420.000 \$	15.000\$	260.000 \$
2011	625000\$	20.000\$	340.000 \$
2012	540.000\$	60.000\$	410.000 \$
2013	720.000\$	340.000\$	700.000\$
2014	740.000\$	260.000\$	720.000 \$
TOTAL	3,045.000	695.000	2,435.000

Results of table 7 shows income of KTU-DERAC is enough over from expenses. That is an important rate to allocate budget to quality assurance studies and new investments. Distance education is a profit-bringing education method for Turkish Higher Education system, but profit increases directly proportional with quality.

3. Conclusion

Advancing and scaling up distance education in universities is not easy. (2011). In this review factors affecting quality and components for deciding quality assurance identified. There is a critical interaction between profit and development of distance education. Investments and development processes are related with all quality assurance factors. Students', instructors 'and staff's comfort and expectations are key factors for success of distance education. All distance education institution has a unique context and organization. Quality must be evaluated regarding components of distance education context and organization.

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MJOSBR

When Student Teachers Meet First Graders in EFL Classrooms

Chiou-hui Chou*

National Hsinchu University of Education, 521 Nanda Road, Hsinchu, 300, Taiwan

Abstract

The teaching practicum is often a capstone component of teacher education programs around the world, offering prospective teachers an opportunity to connect theory with practice under the guidance of their supervisors. Inquiry into student teachers' learning can help bridge the gap between campus-based coursework and real classroom teaching in teacher education. This study reports on a university supervisor's first year experience, observing student teachers' teaching in EFL elementary classrooms, in particular, teaching first graders. Data were collected from classroom observations, post-observation discussions, and student teachers' reflective journals. It finds that the university supervisor tended toward educative supervision, guiding student teachers to implement TESOL methodology from university coursework, to reflect on and learn from classroom experiences, and to examine the effects of their lessons and activities. Examining the classroom observations, the researcher also critically reflected on her university coursework regarding how to prepare prospective teachers to be successful in enacting complex teaching practices. Suggestions concerning the supervision of EFL student teachers are made along with recommendations for further research.

Keywords: EFL, Student Teachers, Teaching Practicum, TESOL

* Corresponding author: Chiou-hui Chou
E-mail address: joyce@mail.nhcue.edu.tw.

1. Introduction

All around the world, teaching practicum, also referred to student teaching, has emerged as an almost universal component of university-based teacher education programs (Anderson & Stillman, 2011). It is widely assumed to provide prospective teachers with meaningful opportunities to learn and it is often a capstone component of teacher education programs, offering prospective teachers an opportunity to connect theory with practice under the guidance of their supervisors (Zeichner, 2002). As Ibrahim (2013) points out, supervision of teachers has been an important research issue. It has been connected to teachers' commitment to teaching, level of satisfaction, and self-efficacy. The lack of a nurturing supervisory relationship between supervisors and teachers can lead to negative attitudes toward the profession and low levels of satisfaction and self-efficacy.

Over the years, studies about university supervisors in supporting student teachers' growth have been emphasized as university supervisors are uniquely positioned to help student teachers to bridge the gap between university coursework and the practical knowledge of teaching that emerges during student teaching. Recently, Bates, Drits, and Ramirez (2011) have found that supervisors have a powerful effect on the quality of future teachers. Therefore, inquiry into student teachers' learning can help bridge the gap between campus-based coursework and real classroom teaching in teacher education.

This study reports on a university supervisor's first year experience, observing student teachers' teaching in EFL elementary classrooms, in particular, when they were teaching first grade students. It finds that the university supervisor tended toward educative supervision, guiding student teachers to implement TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) methodology from university coursework, to reflect on and learn from classroom experiences, and to examine the effects of their lessons and activities on students' learning. Thorough descriptions of classroom episodes are presented and issues regarding TESOL pedagogical content knowledge are discussed. Suggestions concerning the supervision of EFL (English as a foreign language) student teachers are made along with recommendations for further research. This study will help fill a gap in the research on the roles and supervisory approaches of supervisors guiding the learning of English student teachers.

1.1. Purpose of the study

The practicum experience is an important component in the process of learning to teach. It can lead to personal and professional development of student teachers and ease their induction to the profession. However, in the EFL context, little attention is given to student teachers' learning during this important phase of their profession. Over the years, EFL teaching has been criticized with weak focus on teaching in keeping up with communicative methods and approaches. English teachers have been found to lack the ability to put putting into practice what they are learning in their coursework. This suggests investigating the roles and approaches of their supervisors in supporting their learning. According to Gan (2013), despite its recognized importance and prevalence in ESL/EFL teacher education programs, overall, reviews of literature on second or foreign language teaching and learning indicate that research concerning the teaching practicum experience of student teachers in second language teacher education programs is lacking.

A very limited number of studies focus on the supervision of English student teachers teaching first grade students in EFL contexts. For one thing, literature on this issue is minimal. Furthermore, inquiry into university supervisors' approaches to facilitate student teachers'

development is an area that needs more attention. Using the context of this study as an example, the researcher set out to explore the issues of student teaching regarding EFL teacher competence in a reflective practicum.

1.2. The research questions

In order to discuss the issues, the following research questions are addressed: What are the pedagogical issues regarding student teaching in EFL first grade elementary classrooms? How can the university supervisor promote teacher learning in student teaching?

2. Literature Review

The conceptual frameworks for this study draw from reflective practice and community of practice. Research on reflective practice suggests that critical reflection helps prepare prospective teachers for both classroom management and instruction. Recently, the concept of community of practice advocates that teachers can learn more effectively when they are engaged with peers in a similar teaching context. Thus, this study investigates student teachers' development when they are engaged in reflective practice in a community of practice.

2.1. Reflective practice

As literature indicates, in preparing preservice teachers to foster student learning, teacher education programs are increasingly emphasizing systematic inquiry and reflective practice in courses and assessment strategies (Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Friedman, & Pine, 2009). Analyzing and reflecting on practice is a valuable way to improve teaching and promote student learning. Reflective practice involves intentional inquiry. Schon (1983) distinguishes between reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action. Reflection-on-action occurs after the particular event, is consciously and purposely engaged in, and may involve documentation. Reflection-in-action takes place during the event and tends to be a response to surprising or puzzling situations. To enhance teaching effectiveness, student teachers need to develop the habit and capacity to reflect on not only their teaching but also outcomes of their practice (Moir & Baron, 2002). Systematic inquiry and reflective practice can help student teachers assess the effects of their decisions and actions in the classroom (Sandholtz, 2011). Rodgers (2002) points out that reflection, which adheres to the rigor inherent in Dewey's conception, requires teachers to "confront the complexity of students and their learning, of themselves and their teaching, their subject matter, and the contexts in which all these operate" (p. 864).

2.2. Community of practice

Recent recommendations for professional development focus attention on creating local communities that promote the practice of shared inquiry grounded in teachers' work (Crockett, 2002). There is also the expectation that small communities will make it easier for teachers to share practices and will encourage them to create a culture for sustained instructional improvement, which will in turn enhance student learning. Various structures have been used to support teachers' professional growth in collaborative settings, including professional learning communities, lesson study, and communities of practice. These structures encompass a collaborative and inquiry-based approach that can lead to "pedagogy of investigation" (Ball &

Cohen, 1999). The idea of teaming-up teachers into groups is based on the belief that teachers learn from themselves and from others as they progress through their profession, and that this learning has value as a collaborative enterprise.

However, as Supovitz and Christman (2005) mentioned, simply creating a community structure is not enough to change practice significantly. Community leaders must provide the community with the necessary structures, strategies, and support to help teachers hone their instructional craft knowledge. With this in mind, the purpose of this study is to examine how student teachers can increase their teaching competence and examine their teaching in a professional learning community with the guidance of a university supervisor. It is an attempt to enrich the literature on the framework of professional learning community in EFL teacher education.

3. Methodology

3.1. Approach

I conducted a study of investigating student teachers' learning in a community of practice in a semester. For this present study, I report on data collected during the period when student teachers were teaching the first grade students in elementary classrooms. I used a qualitative case study approach to enquire into student teachers' learning during this period as a qualitative case study approach can provide an in-depth description of a specific context. This study is based on the theoretical framework of a phenomenological study, which focuses on descriptions of how people experience and how they perceive their experience of the phenomena under study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

3.2. The participants

The prospective elementary teachers complete their teacher preparation courses during their 4-year undergraduate study. The university usually provides opportunities for student teachers to practice their teaching for a semester in elementary schools near the university. Student teachers can also apply to the elementary school near their hometown to fulfill the one-semester teaching practicum.

The participants in the study were five female student teachers, fulfilling their practicum in two elementary schools in Taiwan. Pseudonyms were used throughout the paper to protect anonymity of the participants. They are Helen, Judy, Cherry, Peggy and Grace. I employed a participant-observer approach (Patton, 2002) and adopted Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) view that I could act as both observer and as participant, moving back and forth on a continuum of possibilities. For example, during the implementation of the first pilot lesson, I tended to act principally as a participant when the student teachers and I were discussing the design of the lesson plan and revision of the lesson; I acted principally as observer when I viewed the student teachers' teaching practice in the classroom.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected using qualitative data techniques and classroom experiences were documented using observations, field notes, written comments of post-lesson conferences, and student teachers' reflective journals.

I used episodes, constituting a rich description of classroom events, to analyze the data. My interest was to identify moments and incidents when student teachers reflected on their teaching events. An episode is “any sequence of happenings in which human beings engage which has some principle of unity” (Harre & Secord, 1972, p. 10). As indicated, episodes involve not only an accounting of what actors do, but also the thoughts, feelings, intentions, plans and so on of all those who participate. The data set was analyzed to identify episodes involving student teaching reflection on action and the university supervisor’s observation. Episodes, involving reflection on action, include incidents that student teachers reflected on in their journal writing and in discussion sessions. The complete data were then further analyzed and interpreted for the purpose of writing an account of the student teachers’ experience of teaching first graders.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain that the amount of time spent in the field works can strengthen the trustworthiness of the study’s findings. Indeed, the student teachers who collaborated with me spent much time implementing the principles of the model of community of practice. Additionally, the use of a large amount of data enabled me to triangulate the findings both within each type of data and between different types of data.

4. Findings

4.1. Episode 1: Writing the alphabet

Since the student teachers began the practicum program at the end of August, they did not know each student so well in early October. Thus, at the beginning of teaching each class, the teacher would give each student a small card and asked them to write their name. The activity was for students to practice writing the alphabet and also for the teacher to call the students by name easily. The student teachers did this type of activity often during their field-teaching while they were taking university courses. However, this time, there were students talking to the teacher who did not know how to write their English names.

Observing Helen’s class made Grace aware of students’ writing difficulties with the ABCs. Grace revised the name card activity in her lesson. She said most first graders could not write their English names. Some could only say their names, not knowing how to spell them. Thus, before class, she prepared a name card for each student and wrote their name with dotted lines. In her teaching, she then asked students to trace the letters on the name card.

In our primary English education, teaching students to write the alphabet was not clearly stated in the guidelines for the first grade’s curriculum. I know most schools set the objectives for first graders in the first semester, which covers teaching how to say and recognize the letters Aa to Mm and to say two to three corresponding words, beginning with the corresponding letter (e.g., apple, ant) and teaching how to say and recognize the letters Nn to Zz the second semester. Writing the alphabet was not a necessary component of the first grade curriculum.

In my field notes, I wrote: As a TESOL educator, I have never asked or assigned my preservice teachers to practice teaching in first grade classrooms. This writing incident was also the first time for me to reflect on how to train preservice teachers to guide first graders to write their names.

4.2. Episode 2: Using realia

In teaching students to say the letters A to F and their corresponding words, the student teachers prepared realia to help them teach the words. The real objects were some apples, two

small balls, some candy, two doughnuts, some eggs, and a flag, put in a cardboard box. After they used the flash cards to teach students to say the letters A to F, they then took out a real object from the box, and taught the students to say the word. The first graders would show surprise and asked questions about the reality of the things, asking (in Chinese), “Is it a real object, teacher?” Peggy wrote in her journal regarding the students’ learning atmosphere in this session. One girl student asked if the doughnut was real. She then showed it to her and let her smell it. She wrote that this action was to allow students to use sensory images to experience and enhance learning. In addition, she found using real objects could also attract students’ attention and increase their focus on learning. She forgot to put the D flash cards on the board, one student then reminded her about skipping the letter.

In Grace’s class, she walked around the class and asked individual students to grab an object from the box and then say the word. Students were very engaged and eager to participate in this activity. One student held the egg too tight and the egg cracked. Students were laughing and noisy. At that moment, as she did not know how to deal with the noisy situation, she did nothing and just ignored this event. After the class, her mentor teacher told her that students thought breaking an egg was fun and would cause a disturbance in class so they would try to grab an egg. Grace wrote on her reflection, saying after the student broke the egg, perhaps she could put aside the other eggs. Then, students might not keep focusing on the egg.

4.3. Episode 3: Teacher modeling

After teaching students to say the words, the teacher prepared a word-practice activity. She used a big poster with the scene of a park and the words taught were hidden or shown somewhere on the poster. Judy put up the poster. She then asked, “What do you see?” Students did not say a word. She wanted to ask the class to look at the poster and pay attention to the words taught. However, the sentence “What do you see?” was incomprehensible to students.

Following the way directions are given to higher grade students, she then asked a student to come the front. In this activity, the teacher said a word, and the student had to circle the word. As she did not use short sentences to give the directions and did not demonstrate how to do this activity, the first student she called stood in front of the poster and did nothing.

It was obvious, the sentence and language she used was beyond students’ English level and thus incomprehensible to them. In my observation notes, I pointed this out. The teacher might use gestures and demonstrate how to do one example. She might say, “I say candy (pointing to candy); you circle the word (using a pen and circling the picture of candy).”

4.4. Episode 4: Using short sentences

Regarding teaching the sentence level, the teacher prepared a poster with the context of a morning scene in a park. There were four people, each saying one sentence. The speech bubbles were the four sentences: “Good morning.” “Good morning.” “Hi, what’s your name?” “My name is ____.” Judy wanted to guide students to look at the poster. She said, “Look at the poster. What are they doing?” Students were silent again. Since this is first graders, they did not know about this sentence structure; thus they would not respond. Moreover, the word “poster” is what we usually used in our methods course, training preservice teachers to present a context. However, this word was beyond the first graders’ comprehension.

I was thinking: Instead of saying poster, teachers might just say the word “picture,” which is more familiar with students. In order to attract students’ attention to this activity, the teacher might

just pointed to a thing and ask, “What’s this?” When students saw a thing they learned in English, they would respond.

4.5. Episode 5: How to attract students’ attention

Students in lower grades have short attention spans. What is a good way to manage class discipline? In Judy’s class, she told a story about the park scene in the poster. At the beginning, her storytelling was OK. Students were trying to see how they could comprehend the meaning by looking at the poster. Then she taught the sentences: “Good morning.” “What’s your name?” and “My name is Bill.” As she talked to the first graders in the same way she talked to students in higher grades, such as using long sentences and words unfamiliar to first graders, the students became bored. Some were playing with the objects on their table, some were absent-minded, and some were idle. In my field notes, I wrote about this situation, saying she might walk around the classroom and use this opportunity to ask students’ names, so students could practice answering by saying their names.

The next week, in Peggy’s class, in teaching this same material, she put up the poster of the park scene on the board. She told a story. While telling about each person, she said the sentence and put the speech bubble beside the person, indicating that the person was saying that sentence. Later, she shuffled the sentences and asked students to come to the front to put the speech bubbles beside the correct person and say the sentence. She was clearly presenting the information in the poster; thus when she asked the class, “What does the girl say?” Students responded, “Good morning.” She knew she was successful in teaching the dialogue.

After she introduced the sentences of “What’s your name?” and “My name is Bill.” She then stepped away from the blackboard and walked toward a student and asked “What’s your name?” Then, she continued the chain dialogue. The strategy of walking round and asking the students, “What’s your name?” increased students’ attention and engaged students in practicing replying to the teacher or their classmates. This activity is a communicative type.

4.6. Episode 6: How to manage discipline

In elementary English classrooms, teachers often like to use chants to reinforce the rules and to regulate discipline. Here are some examples from the student teachers’ classes. The first one is from Peggy’s class.

Teacher: Everyone, stand up.

Students: I stand up (while saying the sentence, students all stand up.)

Teacher: Everyone, look at me.

Students: Look at you.

The second one is from Cherry’s class. The teacher says, “Listen. Listen.” Then the students have to say, “Clap. Clap. Clap.” At the same time, the students would clap their hands three times. Cherry wrote in her reflective journal regarding classroom management (Cherry 1011). She said after she observed the other student teachers’ rules, she found simple and short words worked for students. Students could quickly respond to the teacher’s commands and easily call out the words. The chant she created might not be appropriate since the word “clap” was new to students and not an easy word for them to pronounce. She said she could modify the words “clap, clap, clap” to “A, B, C.”

During the past few years, while visiting schools and evaluating programs in the lower grades, I have seen teachers use chanting of rules to attract students' attention and get them to look up to the front of the room. I have never in my TESOL training or methods courses taught my preservice teachers to use this type of chanting for classroom management or to attract students' attention. Thus, in my field notes, I wrote down this aspect and wanted the student teachers to think: "Why do you use this type of chant?"

4.7. Episode 7: How to arrange group activities

One activity to practice saying sentences is "unscrambling the sentences." In the dialogues, there were two sentences of "Good morning," one sentence of "Hi, what's your name?" and one sentence of "My name is Bill." In Peggy's class, she scrambled the four sentences and put the pieces of each scrambled sentence in a brown paper bag respectively. She then divided the class into four groups and gave each group a bag. She asked each group to work together to unscramble the sentences, then paste the pieces of paper with words onto the paper bag, and show the class when they were done, and say the completed sentences. In my field notes, I wrote: Guiding the first graders to do group work, even in Chinese, was not an easy task. Thus, teachers need to pay more attention to the steps in guiding the students.

Peggy wrote a reflection in her journal regarding this group activity. She said, in each group, there were a couple of students with better English abilities, and it was obvious these students would dominate this activity, leaving some not included and not knowing what to do. Also, some weak students would not read the completed sentence out loud during sharing. Thus, she thought, some minor change could be done: Each group should read the sentence out loud and then ask the class to repeat after them. Then students would have more opportunities to say the practiced sentences.

4.8. Episode 8: How to wrap up a lesson

In a 40-minute elementary English class lesson, evaluating students' learning was often neglected. In this study, the student teachers originally designed a writing activity at the end of the lesson as a wrap-up. They would give each student a card and students had to write their name in the following sentence: "I'm ____." After the first cycle of teaching, the student teachers found there was a discrepancy. In the class, they taught students: "My name is ____." In the writing activity, it seemed like a new sentence to the students. This did not serve as a good wrap-up activity and usually the writing task took more time. Moreover, they did not know how much the students has mastered or learned from the lesson.

I wrote in my journal: In my TESOL methods course, I seldom ask the preservice teachers to demonstrate wrap-up activities. I usually ask students to think how they could present an activity that would connect back to the objective of the lesson. This time, I think the box of real objects can serve as a wrap-up activity and students can be engaged in calling out the words they learned in the lesson.

Thus, during the next cycle of the lesson, the "realia box" was used again. And this time, the teacher walked around the class and asked individual students to pick out an object and say the word. In this way, students were engaged and also could be evaluated.

5. Discussions

5.1. *Engaging students to learn*

The student teachers paid great attention to discipline and managing students' behavior. In the study, except for Grace, every student teacher had their own chants to manage students' discipline. Classroom management has been a great issue in the process of teacher development. Research has shown that novice teachers are often thought to progress through the following stages of development: Being concerned with themselves and how to survive as teachers; being concerned with the teaching situation; and finally having concerns that pertain more to student learning (Fuller & Bown, 1975). The findings of the study are no exception.

However, how to engage students in learning? How can the teachers facilitate students' learning in an EFL classroom and how can they attract students' attention? The following strategies are proposed. First, teaching a foreign language should follow a method. For example, in this study, the participants used realia to teach words, and this strategy increased students' learning motivation and attention. Second, the teacher can have more interaction with students. Communication strategies should be employed. In Asian contexts, most teachers stand near the blackboard, in the front of the classroom, to teach. As a result, it is difficult for him or her to pay attention to the students sitting in the back or on the sides. The monitoring of students learning is rare. Thus, the teacher can design communicative activities and have more interactions with students. They can walk around the class more often, create opportunities to engage students in learning, and involve more students in activities. Third, it is strongly suggested that the teacher use short and simple sentences to give instructions. The concept of comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) should be emphasized. Without teacher modeling, students cannot follow the language to do exercises. In addition, common and short classroom English should be used. Long sentences increase students' anxiety and make students feel bored easily as they get lost often. Fourth, the teacher can create opportunities to engage students in simple language skill activities. When students are immersed in a rich language experiences, they learn words and sentences through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Scaffolding refers to support that teachers provide to students to allow them to successfully carry out tasks that are beyond their independent abilities. With the teacher's guidance and support, students are able to increase or extend their academic skills (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2004). In EFL elementary education, teachers should be able to apply various scaffolding methods to help students to learn the language. For example, teachers can create opportunities for children to act out the meaning of words and use visual aids that illustrate the meanings of words in authentic contexts other than the book in which the word is introduced, as well as provide a model of a task before requiring students to undertake it.

5.2. *What did student teachers learn in the community?*

Bridges (1992) argues that learning is most effective when the learner is actively involved in the learning process, when it takes place as a collaborative rather an isolated activity, and when it is in a context relevant to the learner. In this study, first, the participants and the researcher collaborated to plan the lesson, observe the lessons, and reflect on the teaching practice. It was after the teaching events and classroom observation, reflection, and discussion that the

modification of teaching methods was made for the next instruction and improvement was gained. Teacher collaboration can support teachers' professional learning. In our community, the participants had the opportunity to collaborate with each other—jointly planning a lesson and working together on tasks and strategies to teach the first graders. The community provided powerful contexts for them to exchange ideas and experiences, to develop and discuss new practices, and to give each other feedback.

From a sociocultural perspective, knowledge about teaching is socially constructed. Student teachers link theory with practice through jointly constructed learning communities. The view of knowledge as socially constructed suggests that student teachers should be involved in discourse communities to analyze teaching practices critically and reflectively (Putnam & Borko, 2000).

Second, during the observation, the university supervisor reflected on her teaching experience and made the connection between the theory imparted in university courses and the practical experience gained in the school context. The university supervisor posed questions for the student teachers to think about regarding their teaching steps and activities in relation to TESOL methods. The university supervisor was a source for student teachers' professional knowledge development—offering them teaching support, aiding their reflective practice, and helping them develop their own pedagogical content knowledge.

5.3. What did the university supervisor learn?

The university supervisor is one element of the student teaching experience intended to build a bridge between the university program and K-12 schools. As a university supervisor, serving as the more knowledgeable person, I should mediate the development of the student teacher within the zone of proximal development, helping them get ownership of examining their own practice and finding effective approaches to instruction. Recent research has started to examine supervisors as key players in the teacher education process (Bates & Burbank, 2008; Ralph, 2003). For example, Bates et al. (2011), focus on the concept of supervisor stance (a supervisor's professional knowledge, perspective, and conceptualization about how student teachers learn to teach) and how it influences supervisory practice. They argue that the supervisor's stance can have a clear impact on student teachers' learning opportunities and can result in substantive improvements to the process and experience of student teaching. Initially, in this study, while observing classrooms, I gave student teachers an evaluation sheet and I wrote my classroom observation notes—mostly giving my comments and suggestions from the points of view of TESOL methodology. As I gained more critical incidents in the first grade classrooms, the classroom observation opened a window for me to examine my role as a teacher educator in TESOL. I reflected on the topics and issues that I should include in my TESOL methods course in the future.

Bullough (2005) indicates that, without some explicit attention to the ways in which university supervisors fulfill their roles, the practicum will be a weak exercise in the preparation of student teachers. I have found that collaborative rather than authoritative relationships between the supervisors and the supervisees should exist, if the benefit of learning is to be fully realized for both parties. The study finds that the supervisor's interpersonal relationships with student teachers are important in a professional learning community. Recommendations for future research are in the direction of approaches to supporting student teachers to learn in a community.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated elementary student teachers' experiences teaching in first grade classrooms in an EFL context in Taiwan. The aim of the study was to explore what the pedagogical issues are regarding student teaching in EFL first grade classrooms. With an interest in professionalism and the role of theory, it is necessary to pay attention to the theories that are taught in teacher education programs, and the theories that teachers use in real classrooms and are supposed to draw on. A qualitative case study approach was applied to enquire into the research. A collaborative professional learning community was implemented in this study. Student teachers' learning experiences and reflections were analyzed with a focus on effective language teaching strategies.

To conclude, firstly, teaching first graders in an EFL classroom is quite different from teaching other grade levels in that first graders are at the beginning stage of entering formal education—not only are they learning about discipline in the classroom and learning to increase their concentration span, they are also learning a new language. Without paying attention to these students' English language foundation, teachers may not create an environment for maximizing learning. Thus, language activities to engage first graders to learn are of great importance. Teaching with a method is definitely necessary rather than teaching with no method. Although this is a common-sense finding, it is not a trivial one. Student teachers need to be equipped with interesting and communicative activities to scaffold students to learn.

Secondly, this study adopted the concept of the professional learning community. The community contributes to collaborative learning for one another. Over the course of time and through cycles of planning, teaching, reflecting, and observing, the student teachers have learned how to make judgments and adjustments in situations. Implementing reflective practices in teaching practicum can lead to student teachers' development of pedagogical content knowledge. It was the classroom observation and reflective journal writing that made the student teachers critically reflected on their teaching events. Fosnot (1993) states, learning is “a self-regulated process of resolving inner cognitive conflicts that often become apparent through concrete experience, collaborative discourse, and reflection”(p. 2). That is to say “meaningful knowledge and learning are centered on the learner and are best constructed through collaboration and reflection around personal experience” (Sullivan and Glanz, 2013, p. 39).

Third, it was the classroom observation sessions that provided both the student teachers and the university supervisor an opportunity to thoroughly reflect on what they have learned from university coursework and how they need to learn from the elementary classroom. Without observing first grade English classes, the supervisor would not have gained the practical experience of how to guide her prospective teachers to deliver appropriate classroom language. Simply gaining experience is not equivalent to learning from experience. A fundamental capacity of effective teachers is the ability to think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

The findings of this study are significant since they highlight TESOL pedagogical content knowledge using real teaching incidents in EFL classrooms. Continued exploration of effective methods of supervising student teachers is essential. TESOL teacher educators should seek more potent ways to prepare elementary EFL teachers, and seek for partnership schools to provide opportunities for preservice teachers to develop, test, refine, and improve their teaching competence. A very limited number of studies focus on the supervision of English student

teachers. In this study, I collected data from observations, teaching reflections, and post-lesson discussions. This study will help fill a gap in the research on the roles and supervisory approaches of supervisors guiding the learning of English student teachers.

7. Limitation of the study

The research reported in this paper used a case study methodology, exemplifying an interpretative research paradigm. Its value as research lies in its close attention to importance of details as seen through the eyes of the case study participants themselves, but prompted through the purposeful of the researcher's questions.

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Effectiveness Of Direct Feedback Versus Indirect Feedback In The Learning Of English As A Second Language

Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad^{*}, Sedigheh Abbasnasab Sardareh,

Rosalam Che Me, Abdul Jalil Bin Othman

Department of Language and Literacy Department, Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, 50603, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract

This is a report of a study which evaluated the direct feedback intervention to improve Grade 1 ESL pupils in a Malaysian primary school context. Although direct feedback is well-known in the North American continent, in the Malaysian context this instructional approach is largely unknown. Further some research works in this area suggest that that reading comprehension strategy instruction is not carried out in the majority of reading classrooms. We used a quasi-experimental approach with nonequivalent control group design to collect the causal connections between intervention and outcomes. For the purpose of this study, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare reading performance of Grade 1 Malaysian ESL students with direct feedback and no direct feedback. Unpaired ttest was carried out for direct feedback (N=40, Mean=67.65 and SD=5.45) and control group (N=35, Mean=50.37, SD=2.98) conditions with $t = 16.69$ ($df=73$, and standard error of difference=1.035) and the two-tailed P-value was less than 0.0001 and by conventional criteria suggested a very high practical significance. The effect size for the post-test intervention revealed that really large (Ellis, 2009) Cohen's d effect size of (3.93) and Hedges' g of (3.82) for contravening variables were found. In an ESL Malaysian context, the direct feedback to improve Grade 1 ESL pupils may have some advantages in improving the English reading performance. However, the benefits to the students of this study is still to be determined, and further exploration is needed with well-designed research and a universal method of outcome measurements.

Keywords: Direct Feedback, Grade 1, Malaysian ESL setting, Reading performance

^{*} Corresponding author: Mohd Rashid Bin Mohd Saad
E-mail address: msaadmr@um.edu.my

1. Introduction

Under the Malaysian's national education system, children begin their formal education at age seven. They undergo six years of primary education (Years 1 to 6). The six years of primary education aim at bringing about the overall development of students through skills that cover reading, writing and arithmetic as well as inculcating thinking skills and values. In 2008, the MOE began the trial implementation of the new modular and thematic primary school curriculum. The reason for this curriculum and assessment transformation was to ascertain that the schooling system fulfills students' current and future needs by improving learners' acquisition of communication and thinking skills, creativity and innovation.

To achieve this goal, communication skills; students' physical; spiritual; attitudes and values; humanities; and literacy in science and technology have been highlighted in the new curriculum (Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, Abbasnasab Sardareh et.al., 2014). In keeping with the National Philosophy of Education that aims to develop intellectual, spiritual and emotional potentials of the learners, the new KSSR English language curriculum stresses 'critical literacy'. Pupils are expected to question and evaluate texts to develop individual growth and also function as a productive and effective member of society. Thus, the new ESL curriculum is an attempt to provide students with basic language skills appropriate to their level of development so that they can communicate effectively in different contexts, read and comprehend English texts, write with an appropriate language and style, and use appropriate and correct grammatical rules in both writing and speech (KPM, 2010).

KSSR is a standards-based modular curriculum. The Year One English language syllabus emphasizes acquiring basic language skills and these include competency in reading, writing, listening and speaking, and language arts modules. The fifth module which is grammar is only added in Years 3- 6. Themes and topics are used to present the language to make it more meaningful. Three important themes in the new syllabus are "world of stories, world of self, family and friends; and world of knowledge" (KPM, 2010, p. 7). To implement the new English syllabus successfully, the MOE has provided teachers with document standards. The aim is to provide teachers with some practical suggestions of teaching methods. However, teachers themselves are in a better position to make appropriate decisions in planning their lessons (KPM, 2010).

Teachers select a theme and then decide on appropriate speaking and listening, reading and writing activities. A coherent organization should be sustained between speaking and listening, reading and writing skills. Assessment is regarded as an integrated component of the teaching-learning process. To implement formative assessment successfully, teachers should act as facilitators in the classroom, observe students' performance, obtain information and give students feedback to improve their learning. Teachers use continuous formative assessment to gain feedback and monitor students' progress. Awareness of students' strengths and weaknesses helps teachers to plan the next steps in teaching and learning.

Prior to 2011, in Malaysia, students have been assessed mainly through standardized summative tests developed by the Malaysian Examinations Syndicate (MES). However, with the popularity of Assessment for Learning (AFL) that was popularized by the Assessment Reform Group (1999), in 2008, School-Based Oral Assessment (SBOA) was experimented on some selected schools by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and it was considered as the first step in the use of formative

assessment in ESL classrooms (Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid, 2013a, 2013b) AFL and its effectiveness in students' learning seem to be of interest to the current educational setting. Researchers and educators acknowledge the favorable role of AfL in students' learning, yet, more consistent research needs to be conducted on the practical development of AfL in schools (Black, 2000) as well as teachers' knowledge and understanding of its implementation (Bennett, 2011; Black & Wiliam, 1998ab; Wiliam, 2011). As such, drawing upon Wiliam and Thompson's (2008) framework of aspects of formative assessment this study concerns Year One primary school ESL classes in Malaysia.

2. Literature review

Assessment for learning (AfL) is the main assessment methods and in use currently not only in Malaysia but also around the world (Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, Abbasnasab Sardareh et.al., 2014) AFL which is the focus of this study is often described as formative assessment and is aimed at enhancing students' learning as they interact with their teachers and peers (Crooks, 2002). Gipps (1994) uses this term to explain a shift from traditional summative assessment practices that include "checking whether the information had been received" (p. 26) during the teaching and learning processes. As Stiggins (2002) explains, the basic tenet of AfL is that assessment can improve students' learning.

Perhaps, among the first generation definitions of formative assessment refer to "all activities teachers and their students undertake in assessing themselves, to get information that can be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which [both students and teachers] are engaged "in Black and Wiliam (1998a, p. 2). This definition has been widely used and cited, yet according to Klenowski (2009) "the ways in which the words are interpreted and made manifest in educational policy and practice often reveal misunderstanding of the principles, and distortion of the practices, that the original ideals sought to promote" (p. 263). However, the above mentioned definitions show the most important components of AfL, such as teacher and students' collaboration in classroom discussion and questioning; defining and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success; formative feedback; as well as peer-and-self-assessment technique. These strategies reduce the distance between students' current level and the desired goals and also help students monitor their own learning process (Sadler, 1989). In this study, the aspirations of formative feedback such as direct feedback technique was used but self and peer assessment was not included because of the age-inappropriate samples of the study.

AfL significantly improves learning and instruction. However, the potential of AfL is not fulfilled yet because teachers are not completely familiar with formative assessment and they might only implement some elements of it non-systematically (Bennett, 2011). As Marshall and Drummond (2006) describe, the name of formative assessment might be prevalent but teachers do not conform to the spirit of the AfL. Moreover, many teachers and policy makers regard formative assessment as a tool and describe it as frequently testing students to monitor their progress. Popham (2008) considers formative assessment as a process not simply frequently testing students at the end of each instruction but consistently and periodically.. In this study, one of the spirits was taken to be implemented to the Grade 1 Malaysian ESL pupils.

Teachers should be able to implement effective classroom discussions and questionings (Abbasnasab Sardareh, & Mohd Saad, 2013a,2013b). When students want to express their own

ideas during classroom discussions or answer teachers' questions during the implementation of a lesson, "it is expected that [teachers] will follow-up and provide guidance through probing, allowing students to create their own responses with minimal assistance" (Berk, 2009, p. 265). As Shute (2008) mentions, formative feedback provides students with information to modify and improve their learning and is hypothesized to be the major aim of this study.

According to Stiggins (2008), in an AfL context teachers provide students with continuous formative feedback "which is a necessity in promoting progressive learning" for the pupils (p. 18) and "feedback should serve to clarify, synthesize, expand, modify, raise the level of, or evaluate students' responses" (Cruikshank, Jenkins, & Metcalf, 2009, p. 375). They elaborate that: "The importance of providing feedback is to encourage student-originated responses while correcting or elaborating on their effort. In the case of an incorrect response, it is appropriate to ask the student to provide support for their answer in an effort to guide them towards the correct solution" (p. 377). However, in the Malaysian context few studies (with the exception of Abbasnasab Sardareh & Mohd Rashid, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, Abbasnasab Sardareh et.al., 2014) investigate the effectiveness of providing direct feedback. Especially so, in the reading classes for Grade 1 none has explored or even do an experimental study to find out the effectiveness of providing direct feedback to pupils. This study was carried out to fill that gap and compared the traditional way of teaching reading and the approach that utilized direct feedback as a benchmark to explore reading performance of Grade 1 pupils in Malaysian ESL setting.

Despite issues such as the time it takes to implement formative assessment and undeveloped assessment practices, research evidence from studies conducted in New Zealand, England and the United States have shown that implementing formative assessment is essential for student learning development. Black and Wiliam (1998b) mentioned this aptly, "It is clear that instruction and formative assessment are indivisible" and that "opportunities for pupils to communicate their evolving understanding are built into the planning" of its implementation (p. 143). This statement relates to how teachers should give students feedback to help them monitor their progress towards the learning intentions, and help them achieve those intentions (Wiliam, 2011). Pellegrino (2002) also stated that formative assessment is an integrated part of instruction and helps students get information about the quality of their work, how to improve their work and how to achieve learning goals. In addition, it relates to the notion that instructional strategies are not to be taken lightly for instance when we talk about how to refine instructional strategies. Teaching and assessment are embedded within the instruction and formative assessment occurs during teaching and learning processes (Wiliam, 2011). Black and Wiliam (1998a), in their extensive review on formative assessment, drew together a number of studies on formative assessment but their review was not based on a pre-defined theoretical basis.

Drawing upon Ramaprasad (1983) and Sadler (1989), Wiliam and Thompson (2008) underlined three important strategies that helped Black and William (2006) to develop a more appropriate theoretical framework for formative assessment. These key strategies are as follows:

1. Establishing where the learners are in their learning
2. Establishing where they are going
3. Establishing what needs to be done to get them there (Black & Wiliam, 2012, p. 208).

While teachers are responsible for implementing these three strategies in the classroom, students' role should not be neglected. Both teacher and learners are responsible for learning. It is necessary for teachers to provide a safe learning environment so that students can learn within it (Black & Wiliam, 2012). The first strategy means eliciting evidence of students' learning to see where the learners are in relation to the learning intentions. The second strategy means defining learning intentions to the students and the last strategy intends to provide students with feedback to find the gap and help learners to achieve success.

Wiliam and Thompson (2008) developed their framework of aspects of formative assessment (Black & Wiliam, 2009, 2012; Bennett, 2011). Wiliam and Thompson's (2008) framework of aspects of formative assessment clearly defines AfL, identifies its key elements and explain how these elements work together to achieve desired outcomes (Bennett, 2011). According to Bennett (2011), these key strategies direct teaching and learning processes more effectively. For instance, questioning technique helps teachers identify where students are relative to the learning intentions; by establishing learning goals and success criteria students can identify where they are going, and through feedback they can find out how they can achieve success. In their framework, Wiliam and Thompson (2008) explained that formative assessment consists of five main strategies that define its own territory:

1. Clarifying and sharing learning intentions and criteria for success
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, questions
3. Providing feedback that moves learners forward
4. Activating students as instructional resources for one another, and
5. Activating students as the owners of their own learning

The first step of the AfL process is establishing learning intentions and success criteria "that is worthy and requiring understanding" (DeMeester & Jones, 2009, p. 5) or the goal of students' learning. A lesson presented to students should have clearly stated learning intentions with specific conditions for performance and criteria for evaluating that performance (Orlich, Harder, Callahan, Trevisan, & Brown, 2007). Teachers can clarify and share learning intentions and success criteria in different ways. Some teachers clearly describe the learning intentions at the beginning of the lesson, but they might fail to establish activities that will lead to the achievement of the learning intention and cannot discriminate between the learning intentions and those activities. Instruction is more likely to be effective when teachers start from what students already know and design their instruction based on the learning goals (Wiggins & McTighe, 2000). Therefore, more time is spent on reading, discussing and writing lesson plans learning goals and defining what teachers expect of students. Wiggins and McTighe (2000) note that, first of all, teachers should clarify the learning intentions and establish success criteria. Only then should they explore activities that will lead to achievement of the learning intentions.

Various methods of clarifying and sharing intentions exist, but it is important to know that each objective should clearly state what knowledge, skills, and accountability measures students should have to achieve the learning intentions. Shavelson, Ruiz-Primo, and Wiley (2005) in their research concluded that "if we could make all our goals explicit to our students and ourselves, we might expect much more of their learning and our teaching" (p. 413). Therefore, it is important to define learning intentions and success criteria so that students better understand what is expected of them. Some researchers believe that to reveal learning goals and to enhance students

understanding of the stated goals, students should be able to engage in some form of self- and peer-assessment (Black & Wiliam, 1998ab; Bell, 2000; Cassidy, 2007; Dawson, 2005; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Munns & Woodward, 2006; Sadler, 1989). To do so, students should understand learning targets and the focus for their learning.

If the criteria of success is established and students know what is expected of them, then in order to implement formative assessment effectively, teachers should design tasks to elicit evidence of students' learning and their progress towards learning intentions. Heritage (2007, 2010) mentions that there are different ways of collecting evidence of students' learning, yet, decision should fit the purpose and should also be consistent with the learning intentions. Heritage (2007, 2010) categorizes different strategies for collecting evidence into three types: systematic or curriculum embedded, planned and spontaneous or on-the-fly. Systematic or curriculum embedded strategies include ongoing classroom interactions and tasks such as journals and end-of-section questions. In this study, the curriculum-embedded strategy was used to elicit reading performance hence both pre-test and post-test results based on the standardized nationally-developed tests instead of the common commercially-developed tests by other researchers.

During planned assessment teachers plan questions or students' discussions in advance, to elicit evidence of their learning. Spontaneous assessment is unplanned; for example, during classroom discussion, students might ask a question or say something that makes teachers ask more questions. But, what is more important is to establish a trusting environment. Establishing a trusting environment for instructional conversations between teacher and student is fundamental to effective formative assessment. Bell (2000) termed the phrase "interactive formative assessment" as the occasion when a teacher gives feedbacks to students in the form of a class discussion or a question-answer between teacher and student and when the teacher finds out the need to alter instruction.

Mortimer and Scott (2000) investigated the 'flow of discourse' and 'patterns of classroom talk' between teacher and student from a sociocultural perspective. Their analysis of classroom talk showed how discourse assisted students in developing meaningful understanding of complex science concepts when the teacher provided a balance between presenting concepts and exploring ideas. The teacher's role was to guide and direct the conversation and to initiate, respond and provide feedback (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). Encouraging students to formulate questions about conversation topics, Van Zee, Iwasyk, Krose, Simpson, and Wild (2001) found that when a teacher was attentive to student questions, the feedback information could be altered "by creating comfortable discourse environments" (p. 159). Wilen (2004) noted how a social studies classroom discussions consisting of higher-order questions by the teacher and students gave opportunities for using their knowledge and critical thinking to improve their understanding about the task or problem. They termed this pattern of discourse as instructional responsiveness.

3. Methodology

The overall purpose of this study was to examine the effect of implementing direct feedback on struggling ESL readers in Grade 1 reading performance (Hattie, 2009). Further, to understand how direct feedback help struggling ESL readers in Grade 1 to achieve better reading performance a quasi-experimental research design was carried on these multi-ethnic, multi-ability ESL pupils (N=75) . For the purpose of the current study, the main research question was

formulated as: Given that direct feedback was developed, designed, implemented, and monitored by two ESL teachers, can read performance of ESL Grade 1 students improved? In other words, we hypothesized that the intervention chosen has a positive effect on the Grade 1 Malaysian ESL pupils' reading performance.

The formulated research questions were:

1. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of pupils in the experimental group during the direct feedback intervention periods?
2. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of the experimental group as compared to the control group at the end of the study?
3. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of the experimental group as compared to the control group at the end of the study on two measures: reading comprehension questions and short answer questions?

For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis was the pupils' reading performance based on the implementation of direct feedback of a teacher using simplified English for ESL Malaysian context. Purposive sampling was used in this study based on the expert judgment to select participants that were representative of the population based on the needs of the school, accessibility of teachers and the willingness and eagerness of teachers to participate without force in this study. Because purposive sampling was chosen for this quasi-experimental study, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the other ESL population in Malaysia but adequate for the purpose of acting as a baseline study to describe the effectiveness of the intervention.

Teachers in this study were selected because their willingness to participate and to extend their professional knowledge on what works best at least in the Malaysian ESL primary school context. Teacher A was female, graduated with a basic and Master degrees in ESL from a North America's university, worked both as a primary school teacher and a national ESL expert consultant for government training programs with an ESL teaching experience of 15 years and now continuing her doctoral degree specializing in reading instruction. Teacher B in the control group was female, graduated from a United Kingdom's university and had 20 years ESL teaching experience both in the UK teaching immigrant children and Malaysia and also continuing her doctoral degree specializing in ESL assessment. Both taught at a different school but within the urban district of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The schools basically were populated with low-income and struggling pupils both academically and in other subject matters. The English language national-norm for these schools was below average. There were no disabled students in both experimental and control groups but all students were identified as struggling readers and lacked academic achievements with 35 male pupils and the rest were female and their mean average age was at 7.3 years.

Instruments used for the pre-test results before students were grouped into experimental and control group were based on the nationally-designed quarter term tests as measured based on the two reading measurements: reading short answers and reading comprehension tests, (6 months

after these Grade 1 pupils were exposed to the business-as-usual instructional approach) while for the post-test instrument, a nationally-designed 3rd Quarter term test was used scored by 2 independent raters chosen for their national-based examination expertise with percentage exact agreement (PEA) of two testers across all scoring criteria of 93% (range 80%–100%) when scoring these 75 Grade 1 participants.

Materials prepared for the reading intervention purposes were taken from Ogden's Basic English website (<http://ogden.basic-english.org/>) both for the word lists such as words through pictures (<http://ogden.basic-english.org/wordpic.html>) and reading texts. For reading aloud purposes, 'A Basic Phonetic Reader' by A Llyod James was used (<http://ogden.basic-english.org/abpr.html>). Four short Basic English were selected and taught sequentially (Crusoe gives help to Friday [Coleman Liau Index of 4.88 and Flesch Reading Ease of 78.3%], Jerry's New Year [Coleman Liau Index of 4.9 and Flesch Reading Ease of 78.3%], Tom Thumb [Coleman Liau Index of 5.43 and Flesch Reading Ease of 84.11%], and Florizel and Perdita [Coleman Liau Index of 7.14 and Flesch Reading Ease of 61.81%], by both teachers after the stories were run to check grade-level appropriateness and reading ease using online utility reading text analyzer (<http://www.online-utility.org>).

For teachers professional training it was necessary to give full understanding of the protocol for the research data. For Teacher A in the experimental group 6-week training or 3-hour session per week was given in the techniques and the philosophy of AfL behind the direct feedback technique and how best to implement, monitor and evaluate her instructional time. On the other hand, for Teacher B, the same 6-week training were given with the outline based on the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (Ministry of Education of Malaysia, 2012) so as to ensure that the traditional approach can be classified according to this framework.

Since research suggests that reading comprehension strategy instruction is not carried out in the majority of reading classrooms (McNamara, 2011, Moje, 2008 and Pressley, 2008), in the intervention group, the experienced teacher was explicitly taught guided strategy instruction for 6 weeks before the intervention was carried out, and this technique has demonstrated to help struggling students to overcome problems they encounter when reading to understand (e.g., Block and Duffy, 2008, Duke et al., 2011 and Fisher and Frey, 2008). Some useful strategies to help struggling readers were used in this study. For instance, Weinstein and Meyer (1986) captured the main strategies of memorization, organization, elaboration, and monitoring. Memorization indicates surface-level processing, while the other three contribute to deeper-level processing (Bråten and Samuelstuen, 2004, Bråten and Strømsø, 2011 and Weinstein et al., 1988). Both surface-level and deep-level processing techniques were used in the study.

During the implementation period (July to September, 2013), both teachers were monitored by the researchers in order to check whether the fidelity of their implementations were correctly carried out. During this 12-week intervention period, Both Teacher A and Teacher B wrote their reflections on the selection of materials, pre-reading preparation, during-reading and post-reading activities for 12 weeks to enable them to reflect on their instructional beliefs and practices (the qualitative data is not discussed in this article). On the 14th week of the experiment, their students (N=75) sat for a standardized test (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2012). Scores were carried out by two experienced ESL researchers. The data of the study were collected and analyzed for

both descriptive statistics and ttest for comparative groups. The discussion on the results and its interpretation with limitations is presented next.

Some of the samples during the study used by Teacher A in the intervention group were below-mentioned:

Before reading: Planning for the reading task

1. Set a purpose or decide the materials to read aloud to students
2. Decide how background knowledge of students helps in the understanding of the text presented
3. Focus on both word-level and whole-understanding of the text

During and after reading: Monitoring comprehension

1. Check for inaccurate guesses by students and attend to correct mistakes
2. Decide what is important to understand
3. Reread and check comprehension
4. Help weaker students while not ignoring proficient readers

After reading: Evaluate comprehension and strategy use

1. Evaluate comprehension by giving homework and discuss the homework in the next class
2. Evaluate overall progress in reading for each student
3. Decide if the strategies used were appropriate and change to suit the needs of the pupils
4. Modify strategies if necessary

4. Results and Discussion

The aim of the study was to find out the comparative differences between the interventional direct feedback for Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils and the no direct feedback group for the effectiveness of their (N=75) reading performance after 3 months intervention period. Specifically, the questions to be answered were:

1. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of pupils in the experimental group during the direct feedback intervention periods?
2. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of the experimental group as compared to the control group at the end of the study?
3. Given the conditions of the reading material chosen, designed, and implemented by teachers to Grade 1 ESL Malaysian pupils, what is the reading performance of the experimental group as compared to the control group at the end of the study on two measures: reading comprehension questions and short answer questions?

The contribution of this study is that the selected reading materials, procedure and the outcomes of the intervention can at least help many Malaysian ESL primary school teachers to focus and direct their energy into developing and focusing more on direct feedback for their Assessment for Learning intervention in the future. The result point to the effectiveness of direct feedback intervention but comes with its limitations as well.

First, it points to the effectiveness of direct feedback as compared to the control group. Before the study took place, the two groups had been into the business-as-usual teaching approach classes taught by 2 experienced ESL female teachers at 2 different schools in the same district with a combination of 35 years of teaching experience. The teaching credibility of these two teachers' need to be mentioned for it shows their competency and well-trained backgrounds both for pre-service and in-service ESL trainings that they went through. In the intervention group, the struggling readers started their reading performance based on the descriptive statistics computed ($N=40$, $Mean=39.6$ and $SD=5.01$) quite at the same level with the struggling readers from the control group from another school ($N=35$, $Mean=39.57$, $SD=4.75$). Both groups were at the same level of language competency based on their results on nationally-designed quarter term tests as measured based on the two reading measurements: reading short answers and reading comprehension tests. The effect size for both groups using the traditionally unsystematic feedback techniques stood at Cohen's d effect size ($d=0.006$) which was trivial and showed the ineffectiveness of the technique used by both teachers (<http://www.polyu.edu.hk/mm/effectsizefaqs/calculator/calculator.html>).

After the study took place, the two groups were once again compared on their reading performance. For the purpose of this study, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare reading performance of Grade 1 Malaysian ESL students with direct feedback and no direct feedback. Unpaired ttest was carried out using Graphpad (<http://www.graphpad.com/quickcalcs/ttest2/>) for direct feedback ($N=40$, $Mean=67.65$ and $SD=5.45$) and control group ($N=35$, $Mean=50.37$, $SD=2.98$) conditions with $t=16.69$ ($df=73$, and standard error of difference= 1.035) and the two-tailed P value was less than 0.0001 and by conventional criteria demonstrating the effectiveness of the reading performance intervention using direct feedback. Also, the mean of the Intervention Group minus Control group equals 17.28 and the 95% confidence interval of this difference: From 15.216818 to 19.343182 . This difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant and has the potential of its application in the teaching approaches to Grade 1 Malaysian ESL pupils. The effect size for the post-test intervention revealed that really large (Ellis, 2009) Cohen's d effect size of (3.93).

Research works in this area suggest that reading comprehension strategy instruction is not carried out in the majority of reading classrooms (McNamara, 2011, Moje, 2008 and Pressley, 2008). This article addresses these issues by examining the effectiveness of business-as-usual reading instructional approaches versus direct feedback teaching approaches to enhance reading achievement of struggling readers. It is evident that the study based on the Cohen's effect size value ($d=.62$) suggested a very high practical significance. The highly positively significant differences between these two groups demonstrate the useful and practical applications to the Malaysian ESL setting to enhance reading performances of Grade 1 pupils. Research also shows that formative feedback is the most important part of the assessment process and affects students' learning achievement (Black & Wiliam, 1998a and b, 2006, 2009; Shute, 2008; Wiliam, 2011) and these results synch well with this study. One of the reasons for this effectiveness is that in our study, we did not ask teachers to score students' reading performance before the intervention ended following suggestions by some studies that feedback teachers provide in the form of marks or grades have no significant effect on student learning (Crooks, 1988; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Mory, 2004).

Formative feedback in the form of direct feedback considerably affects students' learning and helps them improve their learning (Hattie & Temperley, 2007; Shute, 2008). Shute (2008) mentions that "formative feedback is information communicated to the learner to modify his or her own thinking or behavior for the purpose of improving learning" (p. 154). In their meta-analysis, Black and Wiliam (1998a) stated that, "feedback to any pupil should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve, and should avoid comparisons with other pupils" (Black & Wiliam, 1998a, p. 143). In our study, the same principles were applied and proved to be effective in the implementation of direct feedback on Grade 1 Malaysian ESL context.

In the Malaysian context, PISA literacy test is used as an international as well as a national benchmark to reading intervention initiatives in schools but so far there has been no appropriate measure as to what is considered effective instruction of reading among school-going populations (Ministry of Education of Malaysia, 2012) and this study was done to explain the difference between good instruction and better instructional approaches. Duke, Pearson, Strachan, and Billman (2011) mentioned that, "teachers matter, especially for complex cognitive tasks like reading for understanding" (p. 51). Therefore, it is important to appropriately select and train teachers for any future reading intervention purposes such as done in the procedure of this study to train both teachers in the principles of AfL but to control one teacher to do her business-as-usual approaches but have the same level of AfL's knowledge.

The present findings should be considered in the context of its limitations although the effectiveness of direct feedback proves to be successful in this study. First, the sample of this study shows the magnitude of reading performance but this sample was small to explore the direction of effects to include other contravening variables of the study such as whole-school intervention approach, teaching experience, classroom environment and so forth. We therefore suggest that future replications should include larger sample size to understand the direction of the effect to other Malaysian ESL context and the rest of the world. Second, Grade 1 Malaysian ESL students proved to respond quite well with the direct feedback technique on their reading performance but as a pilot study more data were needed to be collected using stratified sampling method so that each state in Malaysia can be represented by both the teachers and students and wider applications with better protocol can be developed. One thing is certain in this study; the results can be taken as a baseline study for any comparative direct feedback intervention in any context that has similar conditions as in the Malaysian ESL setting.

4. Conclusion

Although teachers were seen as agent of change (e.g., Hattie, 2009 and Mortimore et al., 1988 among others), effective agent for student's reading comprehension achievements (e.g., Bernhardt, 2011 and Duke et al., 2011, among others), the uncertainty remains that "very effective readers actually use a small repertoire of strategies" (p. 407) during their reading processes and this notion has been supported by many researchers as well (e.g., Grossman et al., 2010, Hattie, 2009, McNamara and Magliano, 2009 and Parris and Block, 2008, among others). Therefore, future researchers may explore to have interventional approaches to combine both direct feedback and instructions in their future study. Guided strategy instruction, such as direct instruction, has been demonstrated to have potential to overcome problems struggling readers have to comprehend

reading texts (e.g., Block and Duffy, 2008, Duke et al., 2011 and Fisher and Frey, 2008). To avoid teachers to become ‘strategy junkies’ (Fisher & Frey, 2008, p. 262), therefore some eclectic and effective strategies that could be more economical in terms of teaching needs to be presented to teachers (Weinstein & Meyer, 1986). Block and Duffy (2008) listed 45 reading strategies such as monitoring, organizing and elaborating with specific strategies such as asking questions, summarizing, and relating what one reads to prior knowledge. Recent research suggests that a more sensible approach would be teaching a small repertoire of strategies in combination (Dole, Nokes, & Drits, 2009, Duke et al., 2011, McNamara and Magliano, 2009, Pressley, 2008) such is the rationale for the chosen intervention of direct instruction and feedback. Further, Block and Duffy (2008) proposed nine strategies “that have been researched and validated to be highly successful since 2000” (p. 22), namely predict; monitor; question; image using; look-backs, rereads, and fix-it strategies; infer; find main ideas, summarize, and draw conclusions; evaluate; and synthesize. This can be a guideline for those teachers who are in need to help their struggling readers to improve reading performance.

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The Mediterranean has the color of mackerel, changeable I mean. You don't always know if it is green or violet, you can't even say it's blue, because the next moment the changing reflection has taken on a tint of rose or gray.

(Vincent Van Gogh)



I have been impressed with the urgency of doing. Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Being willing is not enough; we must do.

(Leonardo da Vinci)

"Strong minds discuss ideas,
average minds discuss events, weak
minds discuss people."

Socrates



There is a single thread of
attitude, a single direction of
flow, that joins our present
time to it's early burgeoning in
Mediterranean civilization.

Arthur Erickson

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