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An Exploration of Literacy Instruction in Higher Education Programs in Missouri

Melinda Odom

An Exploration of Literacy Instruction in Higher Education Programs in Missouri

by

Melinda Odom

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_Roger Mitch Nasser Jr_____   __07/10/2024_____
Dr. Roger "Mitch" Nasser Jr, Dissertation Chair   Date

_Lynda Leavitt, EdD_____   __07/10/2024_____
Dr. Lynda Leavitt, Committee Member   Date

___Merlyn Johnson_____   __07/10/2024_____
Dr. Merlyn Johnson, Committee Member   Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work here at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree here or elsewhere.

Full Legal Name: Melinda Odom

Signature: _____ Date: 7/10/2024

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Abstract

Literacy supports all content areas and is crucial to the academic achievement of all students (Birdyshaw et al., 2017). The International Literacy Association (ILA, 2017) posits that teachers are the most crucial factor in content and pedagogical achievement. The ILA (2019) stresses that students have a right to a highly effective and knowledgeable educator who can provide evidence-based reading instruction. Research illustrates that students who do not learn to read by the third grade continue to struggle throughout school (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013). Rickenbrode and Walsh (2013) confirm that most of these students will remain poor readers and are more likely not to graduate high school. Given the high stakes of our children, it is imperative that educators are prepared to teach reading effectively. This study aimed to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy. This study used conceptualizations of teacher knowledge as a theoretical lens to examine preparation practices that foundational literacy educators use to prepare preservice teachers to teach reading, combined with the theory of Louisa Moats that correcting inadequate teacher preparation is a crucial step in reducing reading problems. In a report by Evens et al. (2018), teacher knowledge is theorized by three domains: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content pedagogical knowledge. The researcher analyzed the curriculums of the participating universities using a rubric and collected the perceptions of all participants through questionnaires and interviews. This study held significance as it contributed to the body of research in Missouri and advanced the exploration of instructors' and novice teachers' perceptions regarding their preparedness to teach reading.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

Literacy supports all content areas and is crucial to the academic achievement of all students (Birdyshaw et al., 2017). The International Literacy Association (ILA, 2017) posits that teachers are the most critical factor in content and pedagogical achievement. The ILA (2019) stresses that students have a right to a highly effective and knowledgeable educator who can provide evidence-based reading instruction. Research illustrates that students who do not learn to read by the third grade will continue to struggle throughout school (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013). Rickenbrode and Walsh (2013) confirm that most of these students will remain poor readers and are more likely not to graduate high school. With these high stakes, teachers must be prepared to teach reading effectively and knowledgeably. The purpose of this study was to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy. The researcher is trying to learn more about teaching and learning and learn about faculty practices that help improve preservice learning and student literacy. Reading is a crucial foundation for children to become successful learners and is a complex process that comprises various skills, including vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension (Moats, 2020). Learning to read is crucial and transforms lives.

Reading is the cornerstone for acquiring knowledge, cultural understanding, democracy, and success in the workplace. Illiteracy costs the global economy more than $1 trillion (U.S. dollars) annually. (Cree et al., 2022). Many experts' strong interest in how to teach reading has escalated into an all-out reading war (Castles et al., 2018). New research has ignited a movement towards using evidence-based strategies to teach

reading, and this researcher would like to explore higher education institutions' curriculums to prepare preservice teachers and how the programs align with research using a qualitative framework. The researcher would like to compare how teacher preparation instructors perceive their students' efficacy of reading instruction against how a new teacher feels about their ability to teach reading.

Background of Study

Reading is a crucial foundation for children to become successful learners. It is a complex process that comprises various skills, including vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension (Moats, 2020). Learning to read transforms lives. It is the cornerstone for acquiring knowledge, cultural understanding, democracy, and success in the workplace. Illiteracy costs the global economy more than $1 trillion (U.S. dollars) annually in direct costs alone (Cree et al., 2022).

The debates and interest in reading instruction turned into reading wars, sparking deep debates (Castles et al., 2018). These debates and discussions over the correct approach to teaching reading began more than two hundred years ago. Horace Mann, an educational reformer and the Massachusetts secretary of the Board of Education advocated against teaching the relationship between letters and sounds. He referred to letters as "skeleton-shaped, bloodless, ghostly apparitions" and asserted, "It is no wonder that the children look and feel so death-like when compelled to face them" (Adams, 1990, p. 22). Throughout the years, reading pedagogy has continued to be at the forefront of educational legislation and topics. In the 1980s, the whole language approach to reading became popular with most reading programs. However, researchers found this approach could have proved more effective towards the decade's end (Kim, 2008). During the

1990s, the pendulum began to swing back to more phonics instruction. This pendulum swing prompted policymakers to comprise a panel of experts to investigate reading pedagogy. Researchers took three years to compile The National Reading Report (NRP; Kim, 2008). Fifteen members collected the data and analysis that went into the report. The data released from the NRP (2000) emphasized that:

> Systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction to create a balanced reading program. Phonics instruction is never a total reading program. In addition, the National Reading Panel found that providing support and guidance during an oral reading of text helped children improve their ability to read connected text with greater speed, accuracy, and comprehension (National Reading Report, 2000, sec. 2, p. 137).

The NRP (2000) also concluded that explicit instruction should involve phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary to enhance reading skills (Kim, 2008). The National Council of Teacher Quality (NCTQ) reported that 48% of Missouri's teacher preparation programs adequately taught the five components of literacy (NCTQ, 2021). Teacher preparation programs are the first phase of professional learning, and evidence-based teaching practices need to be focused on to increase the development of preservice teachers and meet the learning needs of all students.

The National Reading Panel's research in the late 1990s found that students needed the five components of reading to learn to read successfully. The panel reviewed over 10,000 reading program studies and concluded that effective reading instruction must include each component in the elementary grades. The Reading Panel defines the

five components as Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and

Comprehension. After the National Reading Panel published the components, they

became significant and increasingly embedded into reading instruction. It became crucial

to how teachers addressed these five components (Moats, 2009). Scientists estimated that

95% of all students could be taught to read (Moats, 1999). In addition, Moats (1999)

posited that even children moderately at risk for reading failure could successfully learn

to read at grade level with appropriate instruction, except for approximately 5% of

students with disabilities.

Figure 1

The Five Components of Literacy

Note: Figure created by Odom, Melinda from PowerPoint, 2023.

Conceptual Framework

This study utilized the framework of teacher knowledge conceptualizations to

explore the preparation methods employed by foundational literacy educators when

training preservice teachers in the craft of teaching reading. Also, Louisa Moats's theory

significantly rectified inadequate teacher preparation, a critical step in addressing reading

difficulties. Evens et al. (2018) reported that three critical domains structure teacher

knowledge: content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content pedagogical

knowledge. Among these, Shulman (1986) emphasized the significance of content and

pedagogical knowledge, defining it as a "special blend of subject matter expertise and pedagogical skill that is uniquely within the purview of educators, constituting their distinct form of professional comprehension" (p. 8). Educators must profoundly understand their teaching subjects (Evens et al., 2018).

Content and pedagogical knowledge integrate teachers' pedagogical knowledge to develop student understanding with content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Risko and Reid (2019) acknowledge this as a critical factor in the preparation of high-quality literacy teachers. The report noted that applying content pedagogical knowledge requires exceptionally high analytical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making processes. Along with those applications, literacy teacher educators must prepare programs to offer coursework and field experiences that sufficiently develop foundational knowledge among preservice teachers (Joshi et al., 2009; Moats, 2020; Torgeson, 1998). Risko and Reid (2019) posit that teacher educators design, select, and evaluate their programs to significantly impact teacher and student literacy learning as they transition into their role as reading teachers (Risko & Reid, 2019).

Statement of the problem:

With less than half of Missouri's teacher preparation programs needing to teach the five components of literacy, 52% of educator programs fail future teachers and their students (NCTQ, 2021). These findings highlight the correlation between the poor reading achievement of students and teacher preparation programs. In addition, research shows that students who have not mastered reading by the end of third grade are less likely to graduate high school (Hernandez, 2011, p. 3). In 2022, the nation's report card for reading reported that 66% of fourth-grade students in Missouri scored basic or below

basic on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment in 2019 (NAEP, 2022). Given the recent shift towards evidence-based approaches in reading instruction, the researcher aims to investigate the curricula used by higher education institutions in the training of preservice teachers and assess their alignment with current research findings.

Purpose of the Study:

Considering the prevalent issue of low literacy rates in the nation, including the state of Missouri, we must take heed of the words of Louisa Moats (1997), "Correcting the lack of adequate preparation for most teachers would be an essential step toward reducing the reading problems facing this nation" (Brady & Moats, 1997, p. 1). Furthermore, the study intends to examine the perceptions of teacher preparation instructors regarding their students' proficiency in teaching reading, comparing them with the perceptions of new teachers concerning their ability to instruct reading.

The information generated by exploring the effectiveness of higher education will highlight the importance of using an evidence-based curriculum to prepare preservice teachers to teach reading, promote policy change in the state of Missouri to support structured literacy and highlight the negative impact our current situation, at the time of this writing, is having on Missouri's students toward literacy. This study may help promote a change in the culture associated with structured literacy by highlighting the state's current situation's negative impact on student literacy rates and learning in Missouri students by adding to the body of research. The findings of this study have implications related to aspects of teacher preparation programs, such as content course

design, delivery, and materials, as well as to identify gaps in teacher efficacy in higher education.

Research Questions

The study aimed to illuminate critical aspects of higher education's role in shaping the preparation of preservice teachers for literacy instruction. The research questions delve into the instructional techniques favored by college faculty and teachers, the methods employed in teaching literacy, and the alignment between instructor and preservice teachers' perceptions. The researcher crafted these questions to provide valuable insights into teacher preparation components, instructional design, and teacher efficacy.

Research Question 1: What instructional techniques do college faculty perceive are useful in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 2: What instructional techniques do novice teachers perceive are useful in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 3: How do novice teachers perceive the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction?

Research Question 4: How are the five components of literacy taught in preparation programs?

Research Question 5: How do the instructor's perceptions of preservice teachers' knowledge and preparedness compare to new teachers' perceptions of knowledge and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?

Definition of Terms

In this study, several key terms are central to exploring and analyzing higher education teacher preparation programs and literacy instruction. These terms include "structured literacy," denoting a comprehensive approach to reading instruction encompassing phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. These terms serve as a foundation to frame the study's inquiry into the effectiveness of teacher preparation programs, their alignment with evidence-based research findings, and their implications for policy change and student literacy outcomes in Missouri.

Adolescent literacy: Literacy at the middle and high school level (reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills) to meet grade-level standards at the middle and high school level; a set of ordered skills that can be used to accomplish diverse tasks (NCTE, n.d.)

Assessments: Assessment is the process of gathering and discussing information from multiple and diverse sources to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge as a result of their educational experiences; the process culminates when assessment results are used to improve subsequent learning (Moats, 2020).

Balanced Literacy: A variation of the whole-language approach that emphasizes exploring literature organically but includes the explicit instruction of phonics in small doses (D'Souza, 2022).

Curriculum: The overall design of instruction or opportunities provided for learning (Moats, 2020).

Dyslexia: The International Dyslexia Association Board (2002) wrote

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and fluent word recognition and poor spelling and decoding abilities. These difficulties typically result from a deficit in the phonological component of language that is often unexpected in relation to other cognitive abilities and the provision of effective classroom instruction (International Dyslexia Association, 2002).

Evidence-based: approaches to prevention or treatment that are validated by some form of documented scientific evidence. Control groups are used to prove a positive correlation found in research. Evidence-based programs have proven effective over time (NCIL, 2018).

Explicit instruction: a systematic method of teaching with emphasis on proceeding in small steps, checking for understanding, and achieving active and successful participation by all students (NCIL, 2018).

Foundational Skills: Students must master a set of skills (the alphabet, the concept of print, phonological awareness, phonics, high-frequency words, and fluency with vocabulary and comprehension) before they can become readers. The foundational skills are not an end in and of themselves; instead, they are necessary and important components of effective reading instruction designed to develop proficient readers with the ability to comprehend texts across a range of types and disciplines (Moats, 2020).

Intentional instruction: Learning intentions; instruction that has a specific purpose, outcomes, or goals in mind for learners' development and learning (NCIL, 2018).

Literacy: An individual's ability to use printed information and other media to function in society, to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential (NCIL, 2018).

Phonemic awareness: The ability to recognize the individual speech sounds/phonemes in words and be able to manipulate those sounds (NCIL, 2018).

Phonics: The study of the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent; also used as a descriptor for code-based instruction (NCIL, 2018).

Phonological awareness: The sound structures of speech. It is the ability to manipulate sounds from whole words to syllables and all levels of the speech sound systems, including word boundaries, syllables, onset-rime units, and phonemes (NCIL, 2018).

Research-based literacy: Teaching the components of reading, rounded in research, of a particular approach, a specific strategy, or an instructional method which has a record of success to suggest that when this instruction is used with a particular group of children, they can be expected to make adequate gains in reading achievement. Research-based interventions and programs contain theoretical components of research (Moats, 2020).

Science of Reading: A vast interdisciplinary body of scientifically based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing. The research has been conducted over the last five decades worldwide and is derived from thousands of studies in multiple languages. The science of reading has culminated in a preponderance of evidence to inform how proficient reading and writing develop, why some have difficulty, and how

we can most effectively assess and teach and, therefore, improve student outcomes through prevention of and intervention for reading difficulties (NCIL, 2018).

Standardized assessments: Assessments that are designed to sample children's skills within a prescribed domain under controlled conditions. These are given the same way each time (developed empirically, with adequate norms, definite instructions for administration, and evidence of reliability and validity (Moats, 2020).

Structured literacy: Is distinctive in the principles that guide how critical elements are taught, systematic and cumulative, explicit instruction, and diagnostic teaching. It refers to programs that contain the following components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, which are evidentially proven to improve reading skills and are appropriate for all students (NCIL, 2018).

Systematic instruction: Having and showing a methodical procedure, formulated planned approach, can be used for instruction in a carefully planned sequence, from simpler to more complex skills, to include the five components within phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension (Moats, 2020).

Delimitations

Due to the nature of the data, delimitations, and limitations are to be expected. The study's possible delimitations included the following.

Timeframe. The researcher collected surveys at the end of May 2022. Many schools had dismissed for the end of the school year, resulting in only a few submitted responses until resending the surveys at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year.

Location. The research focused exclusively on schools and universities in Missouri; most novice teachers came from Southwest Missouri. The researcher chose to explore only teacher preparation programs in Missouri, resulting in a small sample size.

Sample and Criteria. The sample included only foundational literacy educators and novice teachers teaching for five years or less. The secondary set is the new teacher perceptions of preparedness and the instructor perceptions of new teacher preparedness surveys. This research study did not examine all variables that could impact new teachers. The qualitative study does not differentiate gender, race, region (rural, suburban, or urban) of Missouri, or by area of grade level among elementary, middle, secondary, or special education teachers. This will give insight into their perceptions of preparation during preservice courses despite different teaching contexts. The study is limited to teachers in their first five years of teaching and instructors of teacher preparation programs.

Limitations

In this research study, the researcher identified three limitations. The study's location restricted the inquiries to the 44 certified Teacher Preparation Programs in Missouri, focusing predominantly on novice teachers from the Southwest region rather than encompassing the entire state. Furthermore, the study incorporated novice teachers with five years of teaching experience or less, and the research involved only university faculty members who taught foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation programs. Another limitation arose from using qualitative interviews and questionnaires, as the information collected relied on participant self-reporting based on their reflections and interpretations of individual experiences. The researcher's professional background in

teacher professional development in literacy informed the study's direction, aiming to address the need for increased knowledge about literacy instruction components among educators. To mitigate potential biases, the surveys, interview questions, and document analysis in this study are grounded in existing research. However, the researcher acknowledges that all research is subject to biases and assumptions and has taken steps to identify and eliminate potential sources of bias. These assumptions presumed that the participants offered their responses honestly and willingly.

Summary

Chapter One included a discussion of the two purposes of this study. The first purpose examined the effectiveness of the foundational literacy curriculum for teaching the five components of literacy. The second purpose is to investigate how educator preparation programs (EPPs) prepare student teachers to understand and implement reading curricula in Missouri. The background discussed the importance of new teachers feeling ill-equipped to teach reading effectively (Worthy & Patterson, 2001) and those repercussions for students. The researcher designed the research questions to explore the curriculums utilized in preparing preservice teachers and the perceptions of teacher educators and novice teachers. Chapter One also included the significance of the information generated by exploring the effectiveness of higher education, which will highlight the importance of using an evidence-based curriculum to prepare preservice teachers to teach reading, promote policy change in the state of Missouri to support structured literacy, and highlight the negative impact our current situation is having on Missouri's students toward literacy. This study may help promote a change in the culture associated with structured literacy by highlighting the state's current situation and the

negative impact on student literacy rates and learning for Missouri students. Finally, the

researcher discussed the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. Chapter Two

reviews literature on the background and evolution of teacher preparation programs and

reading instruction. It also describes how the five components of successful reading relate

to one another and how teacher preparedness to teach reading influences the quality of

reading instruction.

1

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

Teaching reading is a complex practice that involves understanding reading development, teachers' practices, decision-making, and how to understand content and pedagogical knowledge. The foundation of this knowledge is understanding how content and pedagogical knowledge intersect. Moats (2009) clarified that it is a complex achievement contrary to the belief that learning to read is natural and easy. Moats (1999) explains that reading requires effort and incremental skill development for many children. In turn, this requires teachers to develop considerable knowledge and skills in understanding how content and pedagogy knowledge evolved. The shift from a behaviorist approach to teacher preparation for reading instruction has occurred toward understanding cognitive processes involved in reading instruction (Neuman & Cunningham, 2008). As a result, teachers' understanding of the complexities of reading instruction became more emphasized (Joshi et al., 2009). Joshi et al. (2009) suggest that educators actively focus on enhancing teacher preparation programs and improving student teaching experiences. New teachers must start teaching with a foundational knowledge of how to teach reading and then be able to incorporate knowledge, theories, and practical teaching experiences (Hoffman et al., 2005). New teachers must develop a foundation of knowledge during the preservice programs to teach reading content.

Evolution and Historical Context of Teaching Reading

In the beginning of reading practices, reading instruction focused on religion. During the birth of our country, Barry (2008) stated that the beginning of reading instruction came from societal values in mostly colonial reading materials. The reading material, the *Hornbook*, first introduced students to Christian beliefs, the alphabet,

syllables, invocation, and The Lord's Prayer (Barry, 2008; Vogt & Shearer, 2013). During the colonial era, teaching students to read included the alphabet method. Teachers used this method to instruct elementary students until around 1820 (Barry, 2008). Students began learning the letters of the alphabet and the syllables aloud; then, they learned to spell by reciting each word of a printed prayer (Barry, 2008). Early teachers also used *The New England Primer*, which much like a *Hornbook*, bore a Puritan influence (Vogt & Shearer, 2013). According to Vogt and Shearer (2013), religion and patriotism supplied the focus of reading instruction from 1607 to 1840. The core instruction involved the recitation of the alphabet, memorization, and religious beliefs. They viewed religion as the primary reason for teaching reading. After the 1820s, reading instruction began to shift towards the whole language approach. Barry (2008) introduced the *McGuffey Readers* based on the concept that children learn to read by recognizing whole words instead of word parts.

The Industrial Revolution took place in the first half of the 20th century, and. reading instruction shifted from reading for religious purposes to reading for information. Phonics instruction began to emerge, and there was an argument about the best way to teach phonics (Vogt & Shearer, 2013). Some experts argued for synthetic phonics, while others advocated an analytic approach to analyzing word parts.

In the mid-century, educators created leveled readers that used a behavioral approach to teach students. Teachers used scripted guides comprised of sight words to instruct the students. In this period, the 1930s to 1960s, students began using the *Dick and Jane* series. The books focused on a whole-word approach to reading instruction (Vogt & Shearer, 2013).

The debate continued to determine the best method of reading instruction during the 1970s and 1980s. Basal readers became popular with scripted lessons, leveled readers, and a format for whole- and ability-group learning. In 1985, they released the publication "Becoming a Nation of Readers". The report stated a change in the thinking of instruction ideals (as cited in Anderson et al., 1985): If a child's reading score improves, the improvement is due to the value of reading instruction.

Instructional practices continued to change into the 1990s and 2000s. Curriculum standards evolved, standardized testing changed, and federal legislation tightened. According to Vogt and Shearer (2013), many classrooms at the beginning of the 21st century used a process-driven approach to reading and writing instruction. The workshop model emerged as a new generation of educators adapted the model to be more focused and goal-orientated (Vogt & Shearer, 2013). During this time, the balanced literacy approach to reading emerged in classrooms. Balanced literacy took two approaches, whole word and phonics, into teaching literacy and merged them into one approach.

The National Reading Panel published its report during the 1990s. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Reading Panel published reports stating that effective reading programs needed to include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension in their instruction (Barry, 2008; Vogt & Shearer, 2013). The government introduced the No Child Left Behind Act into law in 2001, which mandated that states take on more accountability for student achievement. The No Child Left Behind law called for annual student assessments that supported state standards. This action required schools to make "adequate yearly progress," according to Dee and Brian (2011).

By 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act led to the implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) (Vogt & Shearer, 2013); in 2009, the Race to the Top Initiative focused on the goal that students would be college or career-ready by the time that they graduate high school (Vogt & Shearer, 2013). In 2010, the Common Core State Standards initiative introduced an additional set of standards. Massell and Perrault (2014) developed these standards based on rigorous academic content and performance events, emphasizing critical thinking and analysis of content. The standards required teachers to increase rigor and use instructional practices that support advanced thinking and comprehension (Massell & Perrault, 2014).

In 2020, the educational system encountered situations that have affected reading achievement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools closed entirely and then moved to virtual learning, where reading instruction was conducted by technology and virtual meetings were held at home. The pandemic disrupted learning and educational practices and exacerbated these standards based on rigorous academic content and performance events (Massell & Perrault, 2014), declining reading scores (Office for Civil Rights, 2021). Boivin and Welby (2021) noted that the pandemic "has proved that many practices are outdated, and we are experiencing educational history" regarding teacher preparation programs (p. 34). The pre-pandemic disparities combined with disrupted learning have left states calling for fundamental changes in teacher education (Boivin & Welby, 2021).

Overview of Teacher Preparation Programs

Teacher preparation programs have evolved much like practices for reading instruction. In 1962, researchers Austin and Morrison explored teacher preparation programs in reading. The study, *The Torch Lighters,* identified that undergraduate

programs needed to provide more preparation for reading instruction and that teachers are often deficient in the necessary skills to teach beginning reading. Fifteen years later, the researchers revisited the study and concluded that they had improved teacher preparation. However, the programs still needed to continue to teach more about the components of reading instruction (Austin & Morrison, 1977).

The need for more studies on teacher preparation programs continued to surface. In 1986, Shulman explored how a teacher preparation program related to pedogeological content knowledge. Shulman (1986) deduced that pedagogical content knowledge includes merging adequate content knowledge with effective teaching practices. He emphasized the necessity for beginning teachers to acquire more than just disciplinary knowledge in their preparatory programs to be able to teach reading effectively. Policymakers scrutinize education preparation programs, holding educators accountable for meeting standards (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2011; Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015; Interstate Teacher Association and Support Consortium, 2011; International Reading Association [IRA], 2010). Specifically, they reform them to ensure that teachers are prepared to meet the various needs of diverse students in their classrooms (AACTE, 2011). Research showed that Teacher Preparation Programs significantly develop effective educators (Walsh et al., 2006).

Policies and Evolution of Change:

The Holmes group, formed in the 1980s, aimed to develop standards to produce highly effective teachers. Composed of several deans of education from colleges across the country in response to *A Nation at Risk* (Holmes, 1986), the group's finished report,

Tomorrow's Teachers, has been recognized as an influential report on teacher education (Burns et al., 2015). Many components of the standards are still evident in current standards. However, despite the efforts made by the report, teacher education programs still need to work on implementing change (Burns et al., 2015).

In 2001, Congress passed The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act into law — one of the demands of the act called for the development of highly educated teachers. The act recommended incorporating the significance of content into educator development (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). NCLB also called for more accountability of teachers and programs (NCLB, 2002). However, the NCLB Act of 2002 urged states to include leniency in entering teacher programs to ease the requirements and encourage future teachers to enter the profession. The recommendation caused much criticism in the world of education. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006). Responding to the criticism, several reports emerged to shed light on the need for a change in teacher preparedness.

One such report by Arthur Levine (2006) concluded through surveys of college deans, faculty, alumni, and school principals that, as a consensus, the field cannot agree on an effective way to prepare teachers to be practitioners, Levine stated, "We do not know what, where, how, or when teacher education is most effective" (p. 19). The National Research Council also released a similar report in 2010 (National Research Council, 2010).

According to a National Council on Teacher Quality report, only 7% of educator preparation programs actively ensured that preservice teachers received intense experiences or needed to be placed with strong mentor teachers (NCTQ, 2013). The results brought teacher preparation back to the forefront of discussions. However, the

MetLife Report suggested that programs are improving teacher development. The report used surveys and interviews to gauge perceptions of how teacher preparation has changed since 1984. MetLife concluded that the programs are more successful than previously reported (as cited in Markow & Cooper, 2008). In the 1980s, Lee Shulman studied the concept of teacher content knowledge for teaching reading (as cited in Phelps & Schilling, 2004). The study supported the view that teachers need to know the subject they teach and how to explicitly teach it to others (Phelps & Schilling, 2004).

According to an August 2021 board report, the Missouri State Board of Education introduced the Path Forward for Teacher Preparation and Licensure in Early Literacy Initiative. The state will collaborate with national experts to impact student reading achievement through better teacher preparation. However, the Missouri Commissioner's Education Policy Committee Recommendations (2019) failed to mention literacy regarding teacher preparation or recruitment. The Missouri Commissioner's Education Policy Committee had recommended the development of policies that address teacher compensation, leadership roles, mental and physical health assistance, and professional growth opportunities.

Teacher Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

In December 2022, teacher recruitment and retention levels are low statewide, and Missouri is experiencing a shortage of qualified teachers to fill vacant position (MoDESE, 2022). Missouri needs to improve teacher preparation recruitment efforts and reconsider preparation providers' models in ways that encourage a high-quality and diverse selection of candidates. Additionally, the state must enact policies that encourage teachers to continue teaching. These policies may relate to compensation, leadership

opportunities, mental health and wellness support access, and increased support and professional development.

Actions steps:

1. Create a marketing and communications campaign that rebrands the teacher profession to entice people to enter the teaching workforce and emphasizes teachers' beneficial impact on the public. Research shows millennials are attracted to organizations and positions whose missions align with their beliefs.

2. Create opportunities for districts to develop innovative pathways to teaching.

3. Work to change the traditional structure of the teaching profession so that it is a sustainable field in which one can grow. (Shulman, 1986)

In May 2022, Missouri's Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) announced the Missouri Read, Lead, Exceed initiative to move toward the Science of Reading. The state dedicated $35 million in federal relief funds to support student literacy. This initiative will train up to 15,000 educators in Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) (DESE, 2022). This initiative is optional for school districts and not mandated by the state of Missouri. The initiative is not currently available for teacher preparation courses. The state of Missouri is beginning to recognize the importance of aligning instruction with the science of reading. It acknowledges that "if the teacher does not know evidence-based practices and standards, all students will not acquire what is needed to learn" (DESE, 2022, para.7). This ideal should be equally crucial for creating highly qualified teachers with high self-efficacy for teaching reading as they transition into classroom practice.

Teacher Preparation and Coursework

Shulman's work highlighted the significance of teacher content knowledge. It examined teacher preparation regarding pedagogical content knowledge and the need for teachers to acquire pedagogical content knowledge of reading deeply (Shulman,1986). Shulman argues that disciplinary knowledge taught alone in preparation programs lacked enough for teaching in depth. The idea of deeper pedagogy reflects the significance of continuing to evaluate the most effective way to support teachers as they develop a knowledge base of content in reading instruction. Shulman's study in 1987 showed how the connection between content and pedagogical knowledge was taught separately, advancing teacher knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge relates to how a teacher applies what they know about teaching their content and what they know about the content matter. This integration of pedagogy and content matter aligns and transfers into professional practice (Shulman, 1986). When teachers have a sturdy foundation of literacy content, they are better prepared to differentiate reading instruction. A study by Helfrich and Bean (2011) indicated that quality teacher preparation programs need to support the development of reading instruction. These programs must integrate content knowledge coursework with field-level experiences (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Helfrich and Bean (2011) reported that high-quality programs support intense reading instruction. Combining these programs with hands-on reading instruction opportunities enables novice teachers to gain the necessary experience to teach learners confidently. Snow, Griffin, and Burnes (2005) argued that teacher education programs must ensure that every preservice teacher has experience and knowledge about language and literacy.

A substantial part of preparing educators for literacy instruction is the coursework students complete during preservice classes. According to Helfrich and Bean (2011), the combination of coursework and field practicum is essential to the success of a preservice teacher and the ability to deliver valuable reading instruction. Helfrich and Bean (2011) also express that the two experiences of coursework and fieldwork combined form a solid foundation for preservice teachers to learn to meet the demands of laborious classroom instruction.

Teacher education programs lay the groundwork for ensuring that new teachers understand literacy content before entering the classroom to instruct students. This content knowledge is imperative to successful experiences for transitioning to classroom instruction. A study conducted by Cunningham et al. (2004) examined teachers' content knowledge of reading. The study revealed that teachers only sometimes understood language and literacy concepts and that if teachers did have a solid understanding of reading instruction, they were more apt to seek and try innovative approaches to teaching lessons. A similar study by Ruhama and Tirosh (1995) also conveyed that for teachers to make the appropriate decisions to differentiate and assist students, they need to deepen their content knowledge through several dimensions. Therefore, teachers must engage in a curriculum designed to develop their content knowledge and skills to teach literacy. Coursework must provide engaging opportunities for deep learning and a sturdy foundation for developing understanding and skills to instruct students as readers. Providing preservice teachers with a solid foundation for using instructional practices that align with the National Reading Panel's recommendations (National Research Council, 2010) is essential to guaranteeing their preparedness for teaching in the classroom.

Developing Preservice Literacy Teacher Programs

Research on the preparation of teachers has gained attention in the last couple of decades, with several researchers and policymakers calling for changes in the methods currently in place (Anders et al., 2000; Risko et al., 2008). Despite the vast amount of research on how the brain learns to read, educators often need help with the research, due to their own lack of understanding of reading and how to apply the science of reading to classroom instruction (Crowe & Howard, 2020). Wold et al. (2008) studied literacy teacher education that,

> Quality teacher preparation requires the development of a strong literacy knowledge base coupled with practical literacy teaching opportunities. This balance of research-based teaching and practice generates knowledgeable teachers who know literacy, can explain how to engage students effectively, and are secure in what they know and can do (p. 14).

In her work, Moats (1999) advocates for developing solid literacy knowledge, which teacher education programs require. Practitioners should understand the terminology used in reading instruction. Moats asserts that "few teachers are sufficiently well prepared to carry out such instruction due to their preparation programs" (p.14). The International Reading Association (2007) synthesizes that essential qualities of a teacher preparation program should include excellent instructional content, faculty and teaching, practicum work, diversity, program assessments, resources, and vision (International Reading Association, 2007). The IRA also states that successful preparation programs should design the reading components of the core curriculum to include the foundational pillars of literacy. Embedding the foundation of reading instruction in beginning teacher

courses ensures students have a deep understanding of the command of language and reading development (IRA, 2007).

Lenski and associates (2013) explored the extent to which literacy programs were alike across programs, how the programs prioritized standards, and significant aspects of each program. The programs found it essential for candidates to understand the strategies and how to implement literacy theories. Signature features that emerged from the programs were balanced literacy, assessment to inform instruction, and instructional practices and strategies. Wolsey et al. (2013) surveyed over 300 teacher candidates and found that most preservice teachers perceived that they had learned and understood the standards. Wolsey et al. (2013) found that although they felt confident in curriculum and instruction, the students needed to learn foundational skills.

According to NCLB (2001), the definition of a highly qualified teacher of reading must have specific knowledge of the content and instructional application of the five pillars of literacy. Those components are phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Moats (2020), author of *Reading is Rocket Science,* proposes that teacher preparation needs to change. To achieve the goal of equipping teachers to teach reading, the following initiatives should be considered (Moats, 2020):

1. Use research to guide the profession.

2. Establish core professional standards, curricula, and entry-level assessments for new teachers.

3. Align teacher education curricula, student standards, and teacher licensing requirements.

4. Create professional development institutes for professors and expert teachers.

5. Press the developers of textbooks and instructional materials to improve their products.

6. Promote high-quality professional development for teachers.

7. Invest in teaching (Moats, 2020).

Moats (2022) suggests that schools should provide better training to teachers for conducting explicit, systematic, and deliberate reading instruction and designing programs aligned with evidence-based course content. In 2020, two states/jurisdictions, Mississippi and the District of Columbia, changed their teacher preparation programs significantly. They were the only states to make progress on the fourth-grade NAEP reading assessment since 2002. Both made rigorous changes to teacher preparation programs, professional training, and support for existing teachers (Moats, 2022). Teacher coursework and training now include teaching how the brain learns to read, moving readers through systematic reading phases, and differentiating for struggling readers (Moats, 2020). Mississippi and the District of Columbia profoundly impacted teacher preparation and student achievement (NAEP, 2022).

The commission proposed that teacher educators should examine their practices and programs and urged them to seek to use these standards as a guide to develop and sustain high-quality reading teachers (IRA, 2003). The National Commission on Excellence in Elementary Teacher Preparation for Reading Instruction recommended eight critical features used by exemplary programs. These program features included:

1. Content

2. Apprenticeship

3. Vision

4. Resource and mission

5. Personalized teaching

6. Autonomy

7. Community

8. Assessment (IRA, 2003)

In 2009, R. M. Joshi, a Texas A & M faculty member, displayed the results of a survey of university literacy instructors for teacher preparation courses. According to Kilpatrick (2015), the data revealed that 80% of the instructors confused phonemic awareness with phonics. The survey also demonstrated a need for more understanding and unfamiliarity with scientific-oriented research on reading instruction (Kilpatrick, 2015). Two different studies assessed 118 teacher educators for reading and literacy programs. The results showed that the teacher educators could demonstrate syllabic knowledge; they performed poorly on morphology and phonemes concepts and defined phonological awareness as letter-sound correspondence (Joshi et al., 2009). Teacher educators must understand the components of literacy to instruct preservice reading courses effectively. The mere mention or statement of the five components of literacy as objectives should not suffice for addressing these components; instead, the course must have dedicated class time and measures for holding each teacher candidate accountable for learning each component (NCTQ, 2020).

Impact of Teacher Preparation Programs on Reading Scores

The Nation and state of Missouri are concerned about teacher preparation and student achievement quality. Reading is a complicated process, and an estimated 25% of

students struggle to learn to read (Moats, 2009). Data shows that reading proficiency for children of color and children of low-income families is unacceptably low (Fiester, 2013). Reports from *Early Warning* (2013) show that 83% of fourth-grade students from low-income families in high-poverty schools failed proficiency on the NAEP reading assessment (p. 9). Fiester concludes that new research has reinforced the correlation between reading proficiency and failure to graduate high school (Fiester, 2013). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, more than two million dropouts in the age range of 16 to 20 were reported in 2020 (NAEP, 2022). Joshi et al., in 2009, posited that poor reading and writing skills are attributed to high school dropouts. In addition, Sparks (2011) reported that students who cannot read on grade level by the end of the third grade are four times more likely not to graduate.

A recent report from NAEP highlighted student performance trends in reading from 1971 to 2022. The national report of nine-year-old students showed the most significant score drops in reading since 1990 (NAEP, 2022). The NAEP reading scores for Missouri are the lowest scores since 1998. In the most recent report on the 2020-2021 Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), statewide results in English Language Arts scores rose to 51.3% of Missouri students scoring basic or below basic on the assessment (DESE, 2022). The achievement gap widens with minority students, English Language Learners, and impoverished students (Sparks, 2011). Missouri ranks 26th in national reading scores on the Nation's Report Card (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

In addition to low reading scores nationally and statewide, Walsh et al. (2006) concluded that many teacher preparation programs may not teach preservice educators

the basic knowledge required to teach reading (p. 393). Joshi et al. (2009) argued that two

reasons for the poor grasp of literacy acquisition in preservice teachers are due to the lack

of attention that college faculty gave to linguistics and the information provided in the

textbooks used in college courses (p. 461). The study deduced that teacher educators in

the programs need more understanding of linguistic concepts or disagree with what

constitutes effective literacy education in beginning grades. The study also evaluated the

textbooks used in the education course. Joshi et al. (2009) concluded that the textbooks

used in reading courses must provide appropriate information. In addition to the 2009

study by Joshi et al., the NCTQ analyzed 725 textbooks required by teacher preparation

programs nationwide, concluding that 40% of the texts were considered inadequate

(NCTQ, 2020).

Nationally, only 50% of the teacher preparation programs provide adequate

instruction in at least four of the five areas of the components of literacy recommended

by the National Reading Panel (NCTQ, 2020). Missouri trails behind the national average

in every component of literacy except for comprehension. Phonemic awareness is the

first skill needed to learn to read, and Missouri teacher preparation programs only provide

38% of instruction to this first skill needed for students to learn to read (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

How frequently do Traditional Programs Address Each Component of Literacy (NCTQ, 2020)

Torgeson (1998) suggested that if we equip teachers with scientifically based reading methods, we can decrease reading failure from three in 10 children to less than one in 10 children (p. 3). To foster more exceptional knowledge and better literacy instruction, teacher educators must be competent and current in their knowledge base and understanding of the science of how the brain learns to read and the components of literacy.

Many adults who teach reading may remember that learning to read is easy, even though it is overly complex. Due to this, many need help understanding why learning to read is so difficult for some students. The methods used to teach adults how to read may be relied upon by them. Although a few students can learn to read without difficulty, most require explicit and systematic instruction, as stated by Moats in 2020. There needs to be more clarity between the research on learning to read and adequate instruction for

teachers preparing to teach reading. Universities and colleges must teach the science of

reading, including all the components: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

vocabulary, and comprehension.

Additionally, teacher educators must make themselves knowledgeable and open to

the science of reading. Many instructors have entrenched themselves in balanced literacy

and whole-word approaches to reading despite states mandating the teaching of the five

components of literacy. Studies indicate that achieving a balanced approach to these

theories is rarely achieved, and many times the science of reading is disregarded (Walsh

et al., 2006).

Conceptual Framework

This study used conceptualizations of teacher knowledge as a theoretical lens to

examine preparation practices that foundational literacy educators use to prepare

preservice teachers to teach reading, combined with the theory of Louisa Moats that

correcting inadequate teacher preparation is a crucial step in reducing reading problems.

Evens et al. (2018) theorized teacher knowledge across three domains: content

knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and content pedagogical knowledge. From these,

Shulman (1986) considered content pedagogical knowledge the most important and

defined it as a "special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of

teacher, their own special form of professional understanding" (p. 8).

Content pedagogical knowledge integrates how teachers use it to develop student

understanding with content knowledge (Shulman, 1986). Risko and Reid (2019)

acknowledge this as a critical factor in the preparation of high-quality literacy teachers.

The report noted that applying content pedagogical knowledge requires highly analytical

thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. Along with those applications, literacy teacher educators must adequately prepare their programs to offer coursework and field experiences that sufficiently develop foundational knowledge among preservice teachers (Joshi et al., 2009; Moats, 2020; Torgeson, 1998).

Figure 3.

The Relationships between content and Pedagogical Knowledge and Education Preparation Programs Shulman, 1986; Moats, 1999

 Summary

Furthermore, this literature review explored the evolution of reading instruction and teacher preparation programs related to the shifts occurring in modern reading instruction. In addition, this review explored the role of equipping beginning teachers in teacher preparation programs with specialized knowledge of the science of reading and the five components of literacy. Teacher preparation programs should instruct beginning teachers using instructional practices that align with the recommendations of the National Reading Panel. With the increased number of students who need to be at grade-level

expectancy, it is imperative that beginning teachers are prepared with the knowledge needed to meet every student's needs. Consequently, this preparation requires experiences at the university level that support understanding the complexity of linguistics and the in-depth pedagogical content knowledge of the science of reading and the five components of literacy.

Several overarching themes emerge from the literature review. Teaching reading is complex and may be a child's most crucial skill in school. Second, there is a substantial need for a deeper understanding of how the brain learns to read and the linguistics involved in content knowledge in teacher preparation programs and schools nationwide. Third, teacher preparation programs must be more selective of their curriculum and textbooks in reading courses. By doing this, instructors can engage preservice students in academic experiences that broaden their content knowledge and their own content knowledge. Fourth, current research proposes that targeted teaching practices in programs can influence the experiences and support the development of teacher candidates.

In conclusion, literature implies that developing a deepened knowledge of reading practices equips new teachers to teach reading to elementary students. Developing this type of broad knowledge base begins with teacher preparation and their need to examine current practices and curricula to align them with the shifts of scientific evidence-based research. The stagnant scores in reading to the now declining scores illustrate the need for change. Developing knowledge and practice of the science of reading is essential to achieving the state and national aspirations to improve reading instruction. The next logical step would be for the leadership in teacher preparation programs to embrace the

paradigm shift in reading instruction and empower the next generation of teachers to be

effective and knowledgeable reading instructors.

Chapter Three: Research Method and Design

Literacy supports all content areas and is crucial to the academic achievement of all students (Birdyshaw et al., 2017). The International Literacy Association (ILA, 2017) posits that teachers are the most critical factor in content and pedagogical achievement. The ILA (2019) stressed that students have a right to a highly effective and knowledgeable educator who can provide evidence-based reading instruction. Research illustrates that a student who does not learn to read by the third grade continues to struggle throughout school (Rickenbrode & Walsh, 2013). Rickenbrode and Walsh (2013) confirm that most of these students remain poor readers and are more likely not to graduate high school. With these high stakes, teachers must be prepared to teach reading effectively and knowledgeably.

New teachers must begin with a foundational knowledge of how to teach reading and then be able to incorporate knowledge, theories, and practical teaching experiences (Hoffman et al., 2005). These new practitioners need to develop a foundation of knowledge during the preservice programs to teach reading content. This qualitative study explores the literacy curriculum used in higher education programs in Missouri. With the new movement towards using evidence-based strategies to teach reading, this researcher would like to explore the higher education institutions' curriculums to prepare preservice teachers and how the programs align with research using a qualitative framework. The researcher would like to compare how teacher preparation instructors perceive their students' efficacy of reading instruction against how a new teacher feels about their ability to teach reading.

Chapter Three begins with a discussion of the problem and the purpose of the study. Then, the researcher will address the design methodology and the reasoning for choosing the design. Next, the researcher restates the research questions, describes the population and sample size, and the reasoning behind those choices. Then, they explain the reliability and validity of the instrumentation used. Finally, the researcher outlines the data analysis process and discusses the steps taken to ensure the ethical integrity of the research.

Problem and Purpose Overview

In light of the prevalent issue of low literacy rates in the nation, including the state of Missouri, we must take heed of the words of Louisa Moats (1997): "Correcting the lack of adequate preparation for most teachers would be an essential step toward reducing the reading problems facing this nation" (as cited in Brady & Moats, 1997, p. 1). The researcher designed the study to investigate the effectiveness of literacy curricula utilized within higher education programs in Missouri and aims to examine the alignment of these curriculum frameworks with the latest research findings using a qualitative framework. Furthermore, the study intended to examine the perceptions of teacher preparation instructors regarding their students' proficiency in teaching reading, comparing them with the perceptions of new teachers' confidence in their ability to instruct reading. The study explored the literacy curriculum utilized in higher education programs in Missouri. Considering the recent trend towards evidence-based strategies to teach reading, this researcher explored higher education institutions' curricula to prepare preservice teachers and how the programs align with research using a qualitative framework. The researcher compared how teacher preparation instructors perceive their students' efficacy of reading

instruction against how a new teacher feels about their ability to teach reading. A teacher's understanding of the complexities of reading instruction has become more emphasized (Joshi et al., 2009). Therefore, more attention must be given to improving teacher preparation programs and student teaching experiences (Joshi et al., 2009).

Research Design

To ensure the robustness and reliability of this study, the researcher has employed a qualitative approach. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest, the qualitative approach is particularly suitable when the researcher aims to understand how people interpret their experiences (p. 14). Qualitative research comprehensively explains a participant's perspective and reality (Drummond & Camara, 2007). The interpretive qualitative design, whether generic, traditional, or pragmatic inquiry, can effectively connect theory to practice (Percy et al., 2015). By adopting this design, the researcher can leverage existing knowledge and understanding of a topic and explore the study from the participants' perspective, potentially expanding previous knowledge on the subject (Percy et al., 2015).

The data collected from this interpretive qualitative research design is inclusive, allowing the researcher to obtain participants' thoughts on their experiences, events, and processes. The data collection methods used in this study, such as semi-structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, and data analysis, were designed to explore the curriculum used in foundational literacy courses and perceptions of preparedness to teach reading between teacher educators and novice teachers. The researcher encouraged the participants to share their details, which gave the researcher a richer understanding of their perceptions, experiences, and interpretations. The researcher considered various

standard qualitative designs, including case studies, critical social theories, and ethnomethodology, but chose a qualitative approach to delve into the intricacies of individual experiences and viewpoints that would not have been possible through quantitative methodology.

Setting

The qualitative study took place in the natural setting of the participants as they engaged in conversations on Zoom. Self (2021) posits that since the COVID-19 Pandemic, the use of VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) has become the preferred mode of interviews (Self, 2021). Self (2021) goes on to illustrate that those participants who would have previously been intimidated or felt unnatural using the platform now feel normalized (Self, 2021). Speaking with interviewees directly and observing their behaviors within a typical environment is essential to qualitative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study included interviews with Foundational Literacy Educators in teacher preparation programs in Missouri and novice teachers in Missouri to discuss the curriculum used in those programs and the perceptions of preparedness of novice teachers. During the interview, the researcher asked the participants about their foundational literacy courses and techniques, assessments, balanced and structured literacy, teaching philosophies, professional development, and preparedness for teaching reading.

Research Questions

In the ever-changing landscape of literacy education, understanding the pedagogical theories, curriculums, and instructional strategies employed by higher education faculty is of greatest importance. Research emerged from the premise that

college faculty play a pivotal role in shaping the next generation of educators. Given the critical importance of literacy for lifelong success, this explored the literacy curriculums used in higher education preservice courses and investigated college faculty and novice teachers' perceptions of their literacy instruction. These inquiries are designed to explore the instructional techniques and curriculum favored by higher education educators. By exploring these research questions below, the researcher aims to offer valuable insights into the curriculum and methods used by Missouri Education preparation programs and the perception of preparedness of novice teachers.

Research Question 1: What instructional techniques do college faculty perceive useful in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 2: What instructional techniques do novice teachers perceive are useful in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 3: How do novice teachers perceive the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction?

Research Question 4: How are the five components of literacy taught in preparation programs?

Research Question 5: How do the instructor's perceptions of preservice teachers' knowledge and preparedness compare to new teacher's perceptions of knowledge and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?

Population and Sampling

The researchers used sampling methods to identify and recruit potential participants. Maxwell states, "Purposeful sampling is appropriate when the goal is to enroll specific individuals with unique characteristics. Such participants can provide rich

data, or data that are detailed and varied enough that they provide a full and revealing

picture of what is going on" (Maxwell, 2013, p.126). The Report on Teacher Workforce

from MODESE shows that the districts in Missouri employed 71,142 teachers during the

2019-2020 school year (Katnik, 2021, p.5). The school systems employed 8,072 new

hires during that school year (Katnik, 2021, p.5).

Additionally, the searchable directory of Educator Preparation Programs to offer

teacher certification in Missouri lists 44 approved programs (MODESE, 2022). The

researcher purposefully sampled participants from these two groups to provide

perceptions and experiences regarding curriculum and preparedness for the study (Butin,

2009). The novice teachers included any teacher in Missouri who had been teaching in

the classroom for five years or less. This group participated in a survey and then offered

to opt for a Zoom interview. The second group was comprised of university faculty in

Missouri who taught a foundational literacy course. The university faculty educators were

first surveyed and then given the opportunity to participate in a Zoom interview and share

their course syllabi.

Instrument Design

The researcher created two separate questionnaires in *Qualtrics* - one for college

faculty and another for novice teachers. The researcher aimed to collect the participants'

perceptions of effective literacy instruction practices through both questionnaires. The

faculty questionnaire addressed their perceived usefulness of instructional techniques in

teaching literacy curriculum. The questionnaire focused on their perceptions of the

methods used by faculty in teaching literacy curriculum. The questionnaire included

open-ended questions to encourage detailed responses and an optional question about

sharing their course syllabus for data analysis. The novice teacher questionnaire focused

on their perceptions of the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction. The

questionnaire also included open-ended questions to facilitate in-depth responses and an

optional question about their willingness to participate in a virtual interview on Zoom to

provide further insights.

Data Collection

After receiving IRB approval on May 2, 2022, the researcher initiated data

collection through a two-pronged approach. These approaches include distributing

surveys to certified educator preparation programs and recruiting novice teachers. The

researcher emailed the 44 certified educator preparation programs in Missouri, inviting

them to participate in the study. The recruitment email (Appendix A) provided detailed

information about the study, outlined the potential risks and benefits, emphasized the

participants' right to withdraw at any point, and included the link to the respective

questionnaire in *Qualtrics*.

Following the initial email, the researcher secured permission from 11 universities

to share the survey with their foundational literacy course instructors. To maintain

confidentiality, the directors of these programs sent personalized emails to the instructors,

inviting them to participate in the study and providing the survey link. Two universities

did not permit participation in the study, while two other universities requested IRB

approval documentation. The researcher posted surveys in a Missouri teacher Facebook

group to recruit novice teachers. This action resulted in four survey responses. The

Facebook posts and emails mirrored the information provided in the recruitment email for

the university faculty, ensuring that potential participants were fully informed about the study's purpose and procedure, found in Appendix B.

In the initial email outreach, 17 university faculty members responded, while the Facebook post aimed at novice teachers yielded four responses. After waiting for three months for more novice teacher responses without successful recruitment responses, the researcher, with guidance from her dissertation chair, decided to send out the novice teacher survey to 94 southwest Missouri school districts. The researcher requested an addendum from the Institutional Review Board to email the school districts to recruit novice teachers. Once approved, the researcher emailed 94 school districts in southwest Missouri. These emails generated 65 additional novice teacher responses.

Consent Procedures.

The researcher created two different questionnaires in *Qualtrics*. The first questionnaire surveyed university faculty that taught foundational literacy courses. The survey opened with asking what foundational literacy course the teacher educator taught. The section included questions about the course design and materials. The following questions addressed the philosophies of reading instruction. They also explored the respondent's perceptions of their preparedness to teach reading and inquired if they would be interested in a Zoom interview. The open-ended questions encourage discourse. The questionnaire included an additional question about sharing their course syllabi for data analysis—the survey questions are found in Appendix C. The researcher created a second survey, *Qualtrics*, for novice teachers. The first question asked if they had been teachers for five years or less. The following section included questions about the course design and materials. Lastly, the questions explored the participants' perceptions of

preparedness to teach reading and whether the participants would be interested in a

virtual interview on Zoom. The questions were open-ended to encourage discourse. The

questions for the novice teacher participants are found in Appendix D. The participants'

perceptions of preparedness to teach reading and if the participant would be interested in

a virtual interview on Zoom. The open-ended questions encouraged discourse. The

questions for the novice teacher participants are found in Appendix D.

Interviews

The researcher emailed individuals who agreed to participate in a virtual Zoom

interview with the information about the study, the interview questions, and a request to

set up a meeting time. Eleven participants indicated that they would do an interview.

However, only four responded. The researcher set meeting dates and times and sent the

interviewees a password-protected Zoom link. Two university faculty members and two

novice teachers with less than five years of classroom experience participated. The first

two questions sought background information from the participants. The following

section included questions about the course design and materials.

Lastly, the questions explored their perceptions of preparedness to teach reading.

The interviews aimed to establish the types of curricula used in the philosophies of

pedagogy and to gather information about the perceptions of readiness to teach reading to

students. The researcher listened carefully to the participants, trying only to interrupt for

clarification to allow discourse to understand the experiences and to gain specific details.

The researcher maintained a reserved demeanor in the conversation to allow the

participant to contribute to the interview (Padilla-Diaz, 2015). The researcher then asked

again if the participant would share the course syllabi (see Appendix F), to which they

both agreed and emailed them to the researcher directly.

Documents

Each university faculty shared three syllabi from three foundational literacy

courses for six documents.

- Emergent Literacy

- Analyzing and Amending Reading Problems

- Content Area Literacy

- Foundation of Literacy and Language

- Assessment and Remediation of Reading Problems

- Language Arts Methods

The researcher created a syllabus rubric to analyze the syllabi (See Appendix F).

The rubric analyzed the documents for components of literacy, theorists, pedagogical

philosophies, and curriculum used throughout the courses. The researcher complemented

the other qualitative research methods with document analysis to understand the beliefs

of effective literacy instruction, curriculum, and perceptions. The researcher used the

analysis of the syllabi as triangulation to ensure validity and to provide another layer of

reliability in Table 1.

Table 1.

Research questions with instrument measurement.

Research Question	Instrumentation
• What instructional techniques do college faculty perceive are useful in teaching literacy curricula?	• Questionnaire • Interview • Document Analysis
• What instructional techniques do teachers perceive to be useful in teaching literacy curriculum?	• Questionnaire • Interview • Document Analysis
• How do novice teachers perceive the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction?	• Questionnaire • Interview
• How are the five components of literacy taught in preparation programs?	• Questionnaire • Interview • Document Analysis
• How do the instructor's perceptions of preservice teachers' perceptions of learning and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?	• Questionnaire • Interview

Reliability

There are many ways to ensure reliability while conducting qualitative research. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), qualitative researchers must keep detailed documentation of each research step so that other researchers can replicate the study. By documenting each step, the researcher strengthens the research by providing a plan, allowing other researchers to follow the plan in full detail (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). For this study, the researcher used *Qualtrics* to survey participants, making the instrumentation standardized and easy to replicate. A detailed protocol guided the interviews, and a rubric examined the syllabi. The coding process is monitored and checked for consistency to protect data from being coded inconsistently.

Validity

Validity in research is about the truthfulness and reliability of findings (Cypress, 2017). The researcher used triangulation throughout the process to ensure that participants reflected on the same issues (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). These three methods strengthened the research's validity and ensured the information's accuracy. A qualitative approach to research provided an opportunity to explore the accuracy of the surveys, interviews, and syllabi. This approach allowed the researcher to better understand the participants' perceptions, adding to the validity of the findings (Buntin, 2009; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Bias and Reflexivity

The researcher's bias, which includes experiences, education, and expertise, cannot be completely disassociated from a study. However, the researcher employed precautions to

ensure a study free of biases. The following questions posed by Underwood et al. (2010) were considered to guide the study process:

1. Are the questions being asked and the settings within which they are put to participants ones that promote a collaborative approach to the research process and provide participants with maximum latitude to describe their perspectives in their own terms?

2. Is the researcher's perspective limiting participant responses? If so, how?

3. Does the researcher have certain expectations of the results? If so, how might they be influencing the results obtained?

4. Can the research methods employed be modified so that researcher bias is minimized? (p. 1593)

The researcher acknowledges the biases due to their background in reading instruction, but they followed Maxwell's recommendations to reduce bias and reflexivity by using transcripts, document analysis, and triangulation (pp. 124-127).

Data Collection

The data collection process began with obtaining permission from the Colleges of Education from the universities to survey the foundational literacy teacher educators (see Appendix A). Three universities required the Lindenwood IRB Approval Letter (see Appendix H). Next, the researcher gained permission from the Missouri Teacher Facebook Group administrator using the same recruitment letter. The researcher posted the consent form and *Qualtrics* link to the Facebook page after obtaining permission from the administrator. After three months of waiting on survey participants, the researcher requested an amendment to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board to email 94

school districts in Southwest Missouri. After identifying the survey participants willing to

do a virtual Zoom interview, the researcher contacted them through the email they

provided on the survey form and the interview questions to review before scheduling the

interviews. Each participant then scheduled a convenient time for the interview. In

addition, the two university teacher educators indicated they would share their course

syllabi, which they emailed directly to the researcher. MAXQDA coded the data obtained

from transcribing the audio of the Zoom interviews.

Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher used MAXQDA, a popular and widely recognized

qualitative data analysis software, to facilitate the coding from audio interviews, surveys,

and document analysis of syllabi. MAXQDA allowed the researcher to manage a large

amount of qualitative data generated from the original sources and then systematically

identify recurring themes and patterns that emerged from the data. Through MAXQDA's

coding features, the researcher could categorize and label data related to themes to

construct meaningful analysis.

The researcher followed a coding and categorization process to validate the

findings gathered from the analysis. The process involved an initial round of coding to

identify preliminary themes, followed by more focused coding to refine and expand on

the themes. The memo and comment features provide documentation of reflections and

interpretations of the data analysis. Furthermore, the software's query and retrieval codes

allowed the researcher to retrieve specific data about themes and research questions. This

process allowed for a more in-depth examination of the data, enabling the researcher to

answer the research questions by drawing connections across various sources.

Established methodologies in qualitative research guided MAXQDA, enabling a systematic, transparent, and rigorous approach to data analysis. The researcher effectively managed the large amount of data collected and enhanced the reliability of the findings by using MAXQDA. Scholarly literature supports the utilization of software like MAXQDA. Researchers such as MacLeod and Eme (2019) and Saldana (2016) highlight the significance of using software to manage and analyze qualitative data. They emphasize the advantages of using software to manage and analyze data by streamlining the coding process, helping the researcher to visualize data, and enhancing the rigor of the research. The primary tool for data analysis enabled the researcher to examine the themes and patterns within the collected data, contributing to the credibility and depth of the findings presented in the study.

Ethical Considerations

At the beginning of the study, the researcher established ethical considerations for the research. After approval from Lindenwood IRB, the researcher explained the confidentiality precautions used and described them to the participants in emails and consent forms. All correspondence included the fact that the study would be completely voluntary, with the option to opt-out at any time during their participation. The researcher assigned all responses pseudonyms, and identifying documents had identifiers removed. The researcher kept all documents and files in a secured location with a lock and secured electronic information with password protection. The material used for the study is kept in a locked cabinet and destroyed three years after the study is complete.

Summary

Chapter Three began with a recap of the problem and purpose of the study to explore the curriculums that the higher education institutions are using to prepare preservice teachers, how the programs align with research using a qualitative framework, and to compare how teacher preparation instructors perceive their student efficacy of reading instruction against how a new teacher feels about their ability to teach reading. The researcher surveyed and interviewed both groups and obtained syllabi to analyze. The discussion covered the population and sample, along with the instrumentation used. The researcher detailed the methods implemented to ensure validity and reliability and then provided an account of the data collection. Finally, the researcher established ethical considerations to protect the participants. Chapter Four includes the results obtained from the qualitative data.

Chapter Four: Analysis

An emerging trend that advocates for evidence-based methodologies in reading instruction has gained momentum. Situated within a qualitative research paradigm, the primary focus of this exploration is to scrutinize the curricular structures that higher educational institutions in Missouri employ to train preservice teachers in literacy instruction, specifically evaluating their alignment with research using a qualitative framework. Additionally, the study aims to contrast the perceptions of higher education faculty regarding their students' efficacy of reading instruction against how novice teachers feel about their abilities to teach reading.

Research indicates that a considerable 52% of education preparation programs in Missouri need to adequately teach the five components of literacy, compromising the quality of education for prospective and future teachers (NCTQ, 2021). The data illuminated the observed relationship between students' poor reading achievement and deficiencies in education preparation programs. Additional research corroborated that students who have not mastered proficient reading by the end of the third grade are at a greater risk of not graduating high school (Hernandez, 2011, p. 3). Furthermore, in 2019, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assessment, or the nation's report card for reading, reported that an alarming 66% of fourth-grade students in Missouri scored basic or below basic level on reading assessments (NAEP, 2019).

Chapter Four provides an in-depth analysis of the qualitative research findings from the questionnaires, interviews, and syllabi. The study centered around five key research questions that examine the curriculum used in higher education teacher preparation programs and the perceptions held by university faculty and novice teachers

regarding their preparedness to teach reading. The researcher explored the data results

and outlined the themes that came forward during the questionnaires, interviews, and

document analysis of the syllabi.

Overview and Participants

University faculty and novice teachers voluntarily participated in the study by

responding to questions using *Qualtrics*. The researcher administered a questionnaire to

the university faculty. The questionnaire contained open-ended queries that focused on

various aspects, such as instructional materials, course design, components of literacy,

and the faculty's perceptions of student readiness for reading instruction. The researcher

administered a questionnaire to the university faculty. The questionnaire contained open-

ended queries that focused on various aspects, such as instructional materials, course

design, components of literacy, and the faculty's perceptions of student readiness for

reading instruction. Similarly, novice teachers engaged with a separate questionnaire, also

with open-ended questions about course materials, components of literacy, and their

feelings about their readiness to teach reading.

Research Questions and Themes

Five research questions examined the curriculum used in higher education teacher

preparation programs and the perceptions held by university faculty and novice teachers

regarding their preparedness to teach reading. These responses revealed valuable insights

into foundational literacy courses, course design, materials, and the educational

philosophies concerning reading instruction held by faculty and novice educators. The

researcher assigned pseudonyms to all respondents to provide anonymity.

Research Question 1: What instructional techniques do college faculty perceive useful in teaching literacy curricula*?*

To evaluate the instructional techniques that university faculty perceive helpful in teaching literacy, The researcher analyzed the responses to the questionnaires, the faculty interviews, and the six provided syllabi. The responses provided various instructional techniques, and three themes emerged: structured literacy, balanced literacy, and language comprehension. Within these themes, it became apparent that faculty perspectives varied; some preferred structured literacy methods, while others emphasized the importance of balanced literacy instruction, and another group primarily focused more on the language comprehension components of reading instruction.

Theme 1: Teaching Structured Literacy practices and components.

Among the diverse pedagogical approaches that surfaced from the data, structured literacy resonated with a subset of university faculty. Structured literacy involves a systematic, explicit approach to teaching all elements of reading and language arts, and The National Reading Panel's recommendations have validated its foundational elements. However, university instructors expressed different opinions about structured literacy. For example, the professor from the first interview discussed the importance of structured literacy by pointing out its comprehensiveness, stating, "All the courses teach the basics of reading recommended by the National Reading Panel: phonemic/phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension." Meanwhile, Faculty 7 emphasized practical application, requiring students to create virtual lesson plans encompassing critical foundational reading elements. Faculty 4 explains how their curriculum focuses on "the five pillars of reading, phonics, the Simple View of Reading

formula, and base everything on the current Science of Reading". Faculty 5 includes

Scarborough's Reading Rope as an essential component of instruction. LETRS

(Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) and the Science of Reading

are incorporated into the curriculum that Faculty 8 used in foundational courses. Faculty

interview 1 described using a structured literacy program called "Fast Track to Phonics"

with her students. She said the program's explicit and systematic approach helped her

students significantly improve phonemic awareness and phonics skills, and she believes

all students should receive a solid foundation in foundational literacy skills. She also

stated she uses a variety of structured literacy activities in her classroom, such as sound

drills, phoneme manipulation exercises, and multisensory instruction.

On the contrary, Faculty 10 mentioned curricular limits imposed by NCTQ

accreditation, stating,

> I am required to use a textbook that covers these five basics of reading (and other
>
> topics) because we sought NCTQ accreditation. Therefore, I have no choice but to
>
> use the textbook. I use supplemental materials covering other aspects of literacy,
>
> such as working with ELLs, teaching writing, etc.

Faculty 1 posits, "I believe many universities do not teach structured literacy. They omit

all decoding skills, phonics, and structural analysis." Faculty 4 similarly agrees that

phonics instruction is important but advises that reading instruction should include more

than just phonics instruction,

> Most of our college students lack phonics skills. They often express the desire to
>
> learn more phonics. Instead, I teach them the importance of phonics instruction.
>
> There isn't enough time in the semester to only focus on phonics; my hope is that

literacy instruction does not only focus on phonics. It's necessary as a skill to

reading but reading instruction should include more than phonics.

The instructors included several types of texts listed in the syllabus, which support

structured literacy instruction.

- *Equipped for Reading Success* by David Kilpatrick

- *Essentials for Preventing and Overcoming Reading Disabilities* by David

  Kilpatrick

- *Dyslexia: A Practitioner's Handbook* by Gavin Reid

- The National Reading Panel Report (2000)

- Articles from Reading Rockets and recently published articles from The

  Reading League and International Dyslexia Association

The six syllabi provided include some aspects of structured literacy in their texts or

articles used in the course.

Table 2.

Texts or Articles that include components of structured literacy.

	Text/Articles that include coverage of Structured Literacy	Text/Articles that include some coverage of Structured Literacy	Text/Articles that include no coverage of Structured Literacy
EDU 2343		X	
EDU 3013	X		
EDU 3613		X	
EDU 341	X		
ED 343	X		
ED 370		X	

Faculty 3 reflected, "If we can introduce The Science of Reading to pre-service teachers, we will ensure that the next generation of students receives evidence-based instruction."

In summary, the structured literacy approach is an integral part of some institutions' pedagogical alignment, although university instructors differ widely in emphasis and choices. These variations also illustrate the instructors' understanding of literacy instruction and indicate their willingness to adapt and refine their teaching methods. The diversity of instructional materials, ranging from textbooks to scholarly articles, further indicates the multifaceted approach to literacy education and the wide range of texts used to train preservice teachers.

Theme 2: Teaching Balanced Literacy and Components

University faculty considered balanced literacy of considerable importance, which emerged as the second prominent theme from the data. Teachers create a balanced-literacy approach by blending pedagogical practices of whole language and phonics, utilizing various strategies, texts, and practices emphasizing reading for enjoyment. As evidenced in Faculty Interview 2, one faculty member offered an in-depth rationale for her commitment to balanced literacy: "I am probably much more balanced literacy. I grew up in the era when I first started teaching the whole language, and I did a lot of that." Then she elaborated,

> I have watched kids make humongous leaps using balanced literacy. I
> think phonics and phonemic awareness are huge. However, you must learn
> to read real text, books with meaning, and books that you know can

connect to you, rather than just phonetic readers, as I believe you are

harming them. That is all you restrict them to. I think kids need choices.

Similarly, Faculty 4 defined balanced literacy as "essentially structured literacy,"

while Faculty 1 emphasized a multifaceted approach, stating, "I teach that we must focus

on the receptive and expressive. So, it is oral and it's spoken, it's reading and it's written.

So, in that sense, my approach is very balanced." One educator, Faculty 8, answered,

"Literacy is so much bigger than instruction in the foundations of literacy. Can a student

tell you what funds of knowledge are, what translanguaging is, or what makes children's

literature diverse? That is balanced literacy." Faculty 2 claimed, "I use a balanced literacy

approach in my classroom because I want my students to be exposed to a variety of

literacy experiences. I think this helps them to become more well-rounded readers and

writing teachers."

> In faculty interview 2, the interviewee stated,
>
> Going back to that balanced approach. I think we cannot just be one side or the
>
> other, or we're going to do our kids a disservice, and their kids aren't going to fit
>
> into one little mold. They are not going to all learn one way. You have got to have
>
> a variety of ways ready to teach them.

Faculty Member 2 shared that balanced literacy is essential because it provides students

with numerous ways to learn about literacy. This approach includes reading several types

of texts, writing, and engaging in other literacy activities.

The syllabus listed a few of the diverse instructional resources faculty

members offered to inform their balanced literacy approach.

- Fountas and Pinnell's books *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency*: *When Readers Struggle*

- *Running Records for Classroom Teachers* by Marie Clay

- Reading novels and writing summaries for the stories

- Reading Caldecott and Newberry books with a focus on a different topic

Table 3.

Texts or Articles that include components of Balanced Literacy

	Text/Articles that include coverage of Balanced Literacy	Text/Articles that include some coverage of Balanced Literacy	Text/Articles that include no coverage of Balanced Literacy
EDU 2343	X		
EDU 3013		X	
EDU 3613		X	
EDU 341			X
ED 343			X
ED 370			X

In summary, balanced literacy serves as a crucial instructional technique of some university institutions' pedagogical practices. However, it is interpreted and applied differently across educator preparation programs. These variances reflect an adaptive educational environment where instructors draw from various methodologies and resources to meet the diverse needs of preservice teachers.

Theme 3: Language Comprehension

The third theme of this research question is related to the importance of language comprehension within Foundational Literacy courses. University Faculty discussed aspects of small group instruction, focusing on the four pillars of language arts: reading,

writing, speaking, and listening, and the development of comprehension strategies: faculty 9, for instance, prioritized instruction strategies, such as inferring and visualization. Faculty 7 designs individualized programs to meet specific student needs, promotes the habit of recreational reading throughout life, and emphasizes the importance of studying reading across different content areas while learning study skills. Faculty 4 focused on an integrated approach to language arts, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Notably, Faculty 4 also included the differentiation pedagogical methods for English Language Learners and students with disabilities to support their teaching of language comprehension; the instructor utilized a variety of texts and experiences. Faculty 1 includes "all levels of comprehension: literal, creative, reflective, inferential, and evaluative." Texts that support Language Comprehension include:

- *Helping Young Children Learn Language and Literacy* by Vukelich, Enz, & Roskos

- *Literacy Assessment and Intervention for Classroom Teachers* by DeVries

- *The Reading Strategies Book* by Serravallo

- *Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency* by Fountas & Pinnell

- *Teaching Language Arts* by Pam Farris

- *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding, Engagement, and Building Knowledge* by Harvey, Stephanie, and Anne Goudvis

Table 4.

Texts or Articles that include components of Language Comprehension

	Text/Articles that include coverage of Language Comprehension	Text/Articles that include some coverage of Language Comprehension	Text/Articles that include no coverage of Language Comprehension
EDU 2343		X	
EDU 3013		X	
EDU 3613		X	
EDU 341		X	
ED 343		X	
ED 370		X	

The analysis of the syllabi, surveys, and interviews shows that university faculty are making great efforts to incorporate language comprehension skills into their instruction and curriculum. They use a diverse range of materials aimed at incorporating Language Comprehension and acknowledging its importance in Education Preparation Programs.

Research Question 2: What instructional techniques do novice teachers believe aid in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 2 investigates the preferences of novice teachers in teaching literacy. The data collected from the interviews and surveys show a range of materials frequently used by these teachers. This exploration acknowledges the diversity of instructional materials and techniques that novice teachers perceive as beneficial in fostering literacy instruction. Three themes emerged from the data: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness, diverse reading materials, and the use of online resources.

Table 5.

Novice Teachers materials for literacy instruction.

Materials	Times Mentioned
Phonics	XXXX
Phonemic Awareness	XX
Reading with Comprehension Skills	XXX
Assessments	X
Leveled Readers	X
Book Clubs	X
Small Groups	XX
Project-based Learning	X
Basal Readers	X
Online Resources	XXXXX

Theme 1: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness

This theme reveals a strong emphasis on foundational literacy skills. Novice

teacher 3 states that in kindergarten, they use "letter and sound assessments and focus on

beginning and ending sounds." The Phonics texts are *Secret Stories* and *Johnny Can*

Spell, and they use *Heggerty for Phonemic Awareness* to enhance early reading skills.

Teacher 17 practices small groups for phonics instruction. Novice Teacher 9 focuses on

creating lesson plans that focus on phonics and phonemic awareness, providing

differentiation of varied literacy needs.

Theme 2: Various types of reading materials

Novice teachers incorporated a wide range of reading materials, from textbooks

(Basals) and novels and leveled readers to online services for reading. Novice Teacher 2

described using various instructional strategies in her classroom, such as a read-aloud,

shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading. This teacher uses textbooks, novels, and articles for reading instruction. Novice Teacher 9 uses *Epic*! and *Reading A-Z*, which again are online reading materials. Novice Teacher 13 uses *Big Books,* which is similar to an RTI book for students who struggle. Novice Teacher 8 has students read novels and articles and summarize their reading. Novice Teacher 15 incorporates assignments based on different award-winning books: Caldecott, John Newbery, Stonewall, etc. Teacher 19 uses leveled readers from Fountas and Pinnell. The vast amount of reading materials indicates that Educator Preparation Programs need to align their programs to the preferences to meet the diverse needs of teachers and students.

Theme 3: Online Resources

In this digital age, Novice Teachers use various valuable online resources to support literacy education. These include *Prodigy ELA, Common Lit, Epic!, RIF, Hand to Mind*, and the NCTE website. These resources provide accessible content and differentiation to all learners and make literacy instruction more engaging. Digital platforms allow for personalized learning paths, allowing students to progress at their own pace according to their needs. They can adjust material and level of difficulty to ensure students are neither overwhelmed by material that is too advanced nor bored by content that is too easy. Novice teachers deemed these resources as beneficial as they could easily assign different tasks to students, monitor progress in real-time, and keep students engaged.

The research focused on what Novice Teachers perceive as beneficial in teaching literacy, uncovering three main themes: Phonics and Phonemic Awareness, a wide range of reading materials, and online resources. These broad ranges of materials and methods

are evidenced by their frequent mentions during the surveys and interviews. Phonics and Phonemic Awareness are identified by early reading teachers for reading skill development. The mix of texts, novels, articles, and leveled readers cater to various literacy needs and interests. The significant use of technology provides interactive engagement and differentiation for students.

Research Question 3: How do novice teachers perceive the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction?

The survey responses and interviews explore how novice teachers perceive the methods used in their foundational courses. Three main themes emerge from the responses and analysis of the syllabi: practical application and hands-on experience, Structured Literacy, and differentiation for struggling students.

Theme 1: Practical Application and Hands-on Experiences

Novice teachers consistently emphasized the importance of hands-on, practical experiences in their teacher preparation programs. Novice Teacher 21 commented, "I feel like having more hands-on work with active students would have helped me more." These teachers felt that these experiences would better prepare them for the realities of the classroom and help them develop the skills needed to be effective teachers. Novice Teacher Interview 1 described her experience as a local tutor at a local school as "invaluable." She said that she learned so much from working with students one-on-one and that this experience helped her develop her teaching skills and confidence in her classroom. Novice Teacher 13 explained, "They provided us with a lot of tools and activities, but the biggest downfall was not getting to practice those skills. Which was

kind of difficult." The six syllabi shown in Table 4, included class observations,

interviews with teachers, and teaching a literacy lesson.

Table 6.

Hands-on Fieldwork experiences

Syllabus	Observations	Interview a Teacher	Teach a Literacy Lesson
EDU 2343	X		
EDU 3013		X	
EDU 3613		X	
ED 341			X
ED 343			X
ED 370			

Notes: ED 370 did not include any practical experiences

The analysis of the six syllabi revealed that there are components of hands-on,

practical application experiences such as observing classrooms, interviewing teachers,

and teaching literacy lessons in five of the six courses. These experiences vary across the

foundational courses, while ED 370 requires no practical experience. This information

suggests that not all EPPs provide the same level of practical experience, impacting

teacher preparedness. The comments from the Novice Teachers voiced the need for more

engagement with students to apply the tools they are given in their preparation programs.

Theme 2: Structured Literacy

In terms of instructional techniques, novice teachers placed value on structured

literacy as an essential component of their initial training. They believe a solid foundation

in structured literacy, including explicit instruction in decoding skills, phonics, and

phonemic awareness, is non-negotiable for effective literacy instruction. Novice Teacher

22 shared, "Because my classes focused on instructing phonics and sight words, I could

effectively show those skills." In agreement, Novice Teacher 14 commented, "My professors focused on phonemic awareness and phonics, etc. They ensured students understood each structured literacy component, which made me feel prepared to teach reading." Others expressed concerns about the apparent oversight of structured literacy in their training programs, signifying the urgent need to integrate it more thoroughly into the curriculum. Novice Teacher 4 commented, "I am currently enrolled in LETRS, and now I am learning the tools I need about how to teach literacy." Novice teachers also expressed the need for a robust focus on these areas, citing the importance of a solid foundation for all students, particularly those struggling with reading. For example, Novice Teacher Interview 2 said she "felt unprepared for the challenges of teaching struggling readers and wished she had received more training in differentiation strategies and how to implement structured literacy instruction."

Despite its many benefits, some novice teachers express concerns regarding implementing structured literacy, particularly noting a need for more precise understanding and training in effective structured literacy instruction. The emphasis on other approaches, such as balanced literacy, sometimes leaves novice teachers needing clarification about effectively implementing structured literacy strategies, as expressed in the comment from Novice Teacher 12. They stated, "My foundational courses focused more on making reading more enjoyable than on structured literacy." Novice teacher 14 also pointed out that they have a moral responsibility to ensure all students develop essential literacy skills. Structured literacy ensures that all students, including those with specific reading difficulties, receive the instruction they need to succeed.

Theme 3: Differentiation for Struggling Students

Novice teachers emphasize the importance of learning to differentiate instruction for diverse learners through data-driven methods. They highlight their unpreparedness when faced with the range of reading levels and abilities within a single grade. Despite exposure to various teaching strategies, there needs to be more training on effectively implementing these techniques, especially for struggling readers. Novice teachers mentioned the challenge of encountering a vast range of reading levels and abilities within a single classroom. Novice Teacher 12 stated, "I don't feel like I was prepared to teach bigger kids with gaps. It was geared more towards younger kids." Additionally, Novice Teacher 15 commented, "I wasn't prepared (although it seems silly) to be placed in a grade and have such a fluctuation in reading levels and abilities. I feel my biggest struggle is trying to create a lesson and differentiate instruction so drastically." While one novice teacher gained practical skills, such as administering reading-level assessments and utilizing running records to differentiate learning, Novice Teacher 16 stated, "My course helped me with running records and identifying ways to meet struggling readers, or those with accommodations." Other teachers pointed out significant gaps in their training. They desire comprehensive training in effective differentiation strategies. The theme of differentiation for struggling students emerges as a pivotal aspect of novice teachers' perceptions and experiences in literacy instruction. While novice teachers acknowledge the importance of differentiation and express value for strategies, such as data-driven instruction and specialized support, they also highlight significant gaps in the training and preparation in these areas. During the Novice Teacher Interview 1, she discussed how she did not know how to help her struggling readers, as expressed below:

In terms of helping struggling readers, that's something that I don't feel

super confident in. I feel like that's something not only me, but a lot of

seasoned teachers could use some help in as well. I feel like some of the

teachers that are on my team may not feel comfortable in helping a

struggling reader either. There's a serious hole that we could fill. They

[universities] throw a lot of things at us, things to help, but not how to do

it. They're like, here's all this stuff; it'll help your struggling reader, but no

training on how to use it.

The researcher analyzed the six syllabi for assignments, lectures, or texts

that included differentiation for struggling readers. Table 7 shows the findings

below:

Table 7.

The Inclusion of Differentiation in Foundational Courses

Syllabus	Included in Course	Not Included in Course
EDU 2343		X
EDU 2013	X	
EDU3613	X	
ED 341		X
EDU 370	X	
EDU 343		X

Novice teachers identified struggling readers as a crucial aspect of their

literacy instruction and expressed concerns over their preparedness to implement

differentiation strategies effectively. While some teachers acquired training in

administering reading-level assessments, many others still lack the skills to apply

strategies to support struggling readers. Furthermore, the analysis of the six

syllabi reveals a mixed approach to including differentiating strategies in

foundational courses.

Research Question 4: How are the five components of literacy taught in preparation

programs?

Various sources, including questionnaires, novice teacher and faculty interviews,

and university syllabi, provided the data for a detailed exploration and analysis of how

the five components of literacy—phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and

comprehension—are taught in preparation programs. One distinct theme emerged from

the collected data.

Theme 1: Inconsistency in Teaching of the Five Components of Literacy

The five components of literacy include phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,

vocabulary, and comprehension. The theme emerged from analyzing the varying

perspectives and experiences between the Higher Education faculty and the responses of

the Novice Teachers. Fifteen of the 20 novice teachers who responded to the survey

expressed that they did not learn about the five components of literacy, nor did they feel

prepared to teach them to their own students. Novice Teacher 20 responded, "None of the

courses that I took in college focused on the components of literacy." When Teacher

Interview 1 responded about how her instructors included the five components of literacy

in her foundational courses, she responded, "I don't feel like there was a great focus on

the five parts of literacy because I had to look it up, to be honest."

The faculty also had varying views about teaching the components of literacy. Faculty 2 claimed, "I think it's important to teach phonemic awareness and phonics, but I don't think we need to spend a lot of time on fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Those skills will come naturally as students read more." While Faculty 4 posits, "I'm not a big fan of structured literacy. I think it is too rigid and doesn't allow for enough creativity." Eight of the 10 faculty members responded that their courses focused on the components. Faculty 5 commented, "I believe teachers should be fully prepared to teach students at all levels and understand the components of literacy. If teachers do not understand the importance of each component, they are likely to underemphasize its development with their students."

Table 8.

Courses that include the Five Components of Literacy

Syllabus	All components Included in Course	One Component Mentioned	Not Included in Course
EDU 2343			X
EDU 2013		X	
EDU3613		X	
ED 341	X		
EDU 370	X		
EDU 343	X		

Note: The Five Components of Literacy Include Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension

Faculty 1 posits,

I believe that many universities do not teach structured literacy or the five

components of literacy. They omit instruction in all decoding skills. I also see this

in public K-6 schools where instruction in these areas is not taught.

The syllabi provided another example of the inclusion of the five components of literacy,

as seen in Table 8, corroborating the theme of inconsistency.

Research Question 5: How do the instructor's perceptions of preservice teachers'

knowledge and preparedness compare to new teachers' perceptions of learning and

preparedness to teach foundational literacy?

To address research question five, "How do the instructor's perceptions of

preservice teachers' knowledge and preparedness compare to new teachers' perceptions of

learning and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?" The data shows a considerable

gap between instructor perceptions and novice teachers' real-world experiences. This

disconnection is highlighted in the emerging themes of a discrepancy between instructor

perceptions and novice teachers' experiences and the need for further professional

development in literacy instruction.

Theme 1: A Significant Discrepancy Between Instructor Perceptions and Novice

Teachers' Experiences

Novice Teacher 1 stated,

I was really surprised at how unprepared I felt when I first started teaching

reading. I thought I had learned everything I needed to know in my teacher

preparation program, but I was quickly overwhelmed by the demands of the

classroom. I felt like I didn't have the skills or knowledge to teach all of my students to read effectively.

Novice Teacher 2 stated, "I felt like I was thrown into the deep end when I started teaching reading. I had no idea how to teach phonics, and I didn't have any experience with different reading strategies. I felt like I was failing my students." Novice Teacher 18 stated, "I am beginning my second year of teaching, and I am concerned that I will be in fight or flight again trying to teach my students to read." Similarly, Novice Teacher 20 responded, "I do not feel prepared to teach any student to read." Novice Teacher 25 "did not feel adequately prepared to teach the components of literacy at the end of the course due to not taking a course that emphasized the components of literacy.

In comparison, 10 out of 10 faculty responded that their pre-service teachers were prepared to teach the components of literacy at the end of the course. However, Faculty 7 reports that one-on-one interviews are conducted at the end of the course, and the respondent believes "about 75-85% of the students have a solid grasp of the concepts." Faculty 5 responded, "My students are prepared, but they need more than we can offer."

All of the Faculty believed their students were prepared to teach the components of literacy at the end of their course; however, 15 of the 20 Novice Teachers stated they did not feel prepared to teach the literacy components.

Theme 2: The Pressing Need for Enhanced Training

Faculty Interview 1 stated,

I think we need to do a better job of preparing our preservice teachers for the realities of the classroom. We need to give them more opportunities to practice

teaching reading, and we need to make sure that they are familiar with all of the

different available reading strategies.

Novice Teacher 3 stated, "I wish I had had more training on how to teach reading to

students with different learning needs. I feel like I'm not doing enough to help my

struggling students." Similarly, Novice Teacher 4 responded, "No, I was not prepared, but

thankfully, I am part of a literacy grant that is giving me the tools I need to teach

literacy." Novice Teacher 10 stated, "I lacked the educational experience to implement all

the components of literacy. I have had to supplement my original education with

professional development to keep up." Novice Teacher 23 explained, "If I was taught the

components of literacy, it was very brief. I am currently taking LETRS, and now have a

better understanding of the components of literacy.

These interviews show the significant gap between instructor perceptions and the

real-world experiences of novice teachers. Additionally, novice teachers often need more

opportunities to seek professional development in literacy instruction. As a result, many

novice teachers feel unprepared to teach reading and need help to meet the needs of their

students.

Summary

This study investigated the perceptions of college faculty and new teachers

regarding teaching foundational literacy. The study found a significant gap between

faculty perceptions and new teachers' experiences. University Faculty believe their

students are well prepared to teach foundational literacy, while new teachers report

feeling unprepared and overwhelmed. The study also found an urgent need for enhanced

training for preservice teachers. Both faculty and new teachers agree that current training

programs must adequately prepare teachers for the realities of the classroom. The study

concludes that there is a need for significant changes to teacher preparation programs to

ensure that new teachers are prepared to teach foundational literacy effectively.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The study explored the curriculum used by Faculty in higher education literacy courses, as well as the teaching of the five foundational components of literacy (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension) in education preparation programs. The study reveals a gap in the comprehensive teaching of these literacy components in university foundational courses through analysis of questionnaires, interviews, and syllabi. The study revealed incomplete education in literacy components in foundational courses, leading to most novice teachers feeling unprepared to teach reading effectively. Despite some faculty's nuanced understanding, the novice teachers believed there to be an acute absence of the five components of literacy.

Upon further exploration, a notable difference between instructors' and novice teachers' perceptions of preparedness to teach foundational literacy emerged. Even as instructors believe in the effectiveness of their training, novice teachers overwhelmingly feel underprepared and desire more comprehensive training, especially in phonics and practical classroom experience. The findings suggest a pressing need for a reevaluation of current curricular and instructional strategies in teacher preparation programs, advocating for a more practical and comprehensive approach to literacy education training to ensure the adequate preparation of novice teachers for real-world classroom reading challenges.

The study employed a qualitative research methodology to explore educational preparation programs' curriculums for teaching the five components of literacy and assess the preparedness of novice teachers. The research tools included questionnaires, personal interviews with university faculty and novice teachers, and an analysis of university

syllabi. Both faculty and novice teachers completed the questionnaires to provide insights about the instructional methods and content related to literacy components in the preparation programs. The personal interviews with novice teachers provided a deeper understanding of their feelings of preparedness and any gaps they experienced in their training, offering firsthand accounts of their readiness and challenges in teaching literacy to students. The researcher methodically analyzed the collected data to identify emerging themes, which provided a detailed and comprehensive insight into the current state of literacy education in teacher preparation programs. In the following paragraphs, the researcher will discuss the emerging themes discovered from the diverse perspectives and experiences of novice teachers and university faculty.

Research Questions

Five pivotal research questions, each structured around the higher education literacy curricula, guide the study. These questions delve into novice teachers' perceptions and readiness to teach reading. To answer these questions, the researcher meticulously collected data through questionnaires, interviews, and analysis of university syllabi. This data provided valuable insights into foundational literacy courses, course design, materials, and the educational philosophies and perceptions of the faculty and novice teachers.

Research Question 1: What instructional techniques do college faculty perceive useful in teaching literacy curricula?

Research Question 1 focused on the instructional techniques that college faculty perceive helpful in teaching literacy curricula. The data analysis revealed three significant themes: teaching structured literacy practices and components, teaching balanced literacy

and components, and teaching language comprehension. The faculty employs a variety of strategies, textbooks, and approaches to literacy instruction in their foundational literacy courses, all of which align with these themes.

Theme 1: Structured Literacy

With the emphasis on structured literacy, some faculty valued the five components of literacy and used material, created assignments, and designed their course around structured literacy, even aligning their teachings with the National Reading Panel's recommendations. The inclusion of texts, such as "Equipped for Reading Success" by David Kilpatrick and "The National Reading Report (2000)," in the syllabi reinforced the theme of structured literacy in teacher education programs. Faculty in the survey mention many texts, websites, or articles that support structured literacy they perceive as beneficial to their foundational courses.

Even though structured literacy emerged as a prominent theme, other instructors stated they must use a text that teaches structured literacy and supplement it with other materials or comment about it in a negative light, suggesting that structured literacy was boring or even hurt students. These two differing opinions about structured literacy showcase how this approach to reading instruction is not uniform across the state.

Theme 2: Teaching Balanced Literacy and Components.

In exploring the instructional techniques that Education Preparation Faculty perceived as beneficial to their foundational courses, the balanced literacy approach and components emerged as a theme. The balanced literacy approach to literacy is recognized as a holistic approach to teaching reading instruction. It combines both phonics and whole language strategies to create comprehensive literacy. A number of faculty

members from the surveys advocated that classroom students need a variety of literacy

experiences, not just phonics instruction, to learn to love and find joy in reading. Faculty

who lean heavily towards balanced literacy often reflect on their own experiences and

educational experiences from previous classroom instruction. They discuss that they have

witnessed firsthand and positive experiences teaching students to read. Critically, some

faculty express a strong conviction that not using a balanced literacy approach would be a

disservice to their students, as far as saying that it would damage young readers. They

also allude to being trained in the balanced literacy approach themselves and relying on

their experience to educate future teachers in reading instruction.

Resources deemed beneficial for faculty with this approach are texts, such as

Fountas and Pinnell's leveled reading system, Running Records, and exploring ways to

make reading enjoyable for students through book clubs, building classroom libraries,

and reading literature. After analyzing the syllabi, interviews, and surveys, it became

apparent that the balanced literacy approach and components are cornerstones of many

programs in Missouri.

Theme 3: Language Comprehension

While exploring the instructional techniques that the university faculty found

beneficial, the focus on language comprehension within foundational literacy courses

emerged as a prominent theme. The survey comments, syllabi, and interviews all

emphasized the role of language comprehension in the courses. In analyzing the syllabi,

each course included at least one component for reading comprehension. Faculty that

advocated for more of a focus on language comprehension skills rely heavily on

assignments for teaching strategies for reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills by

integrating discussions, presentations, and listening exercises. Faculty comments also emphasized the importance of integrating reading in different content areas.

Texts that are listed as beneficial included *The Reading Strategies Book, Teaching for Comprehending and Fluency,* and *Strategies that Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding, Engagement, and Building Knowledge.* These texts offer practical knowledge and guidance on implementing effective comprehension strategies in reading instruction. The deliberate use of these texts by faculty reflects the effort of faculty with the tools for language comprehension to elevate their students' understanding of reading from comprehension.

Research Question 2: What instructional techniques do novice teachers believe aid in teaching literacy curricula?

In exploring research question two, three themes emerged as instructional materials that novice teachers found instrumental in teaching literacy - phonemic awareness and phonics, the utilization of various texts, and the use of online resources. These themes highlight the extreme complexity required to meet the needs of diverse learners in today's classroom. While distinct, these themes collectively form a foundation for effective literacy instruction.

Theme 1: Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

The emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics aligns with the critical importance of foundational reading skills needed in the early stages of reading development. Novice teachers recognize the value of a structured literacy approach, characterized by its systematic and explicit instruction of phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The survey feedback showed the reliance on

specific programs known for their systematic approach to phonemic awareness and phonics skills. These programs come with detailed scope and sequence and scripts that allow teachers to provide a systematic and explicit guide to teach the skills needed for early literacy. Small group instruction was also mentioned as a method of differentiating these skills to meet the needs of learners in phonemic awareness and phonics instruction.

The preference for structured literacy instruction among novice teachers exhibits a recognition of the foundational role that these components play in early reading instruction. By focusing on these components of literacy, novice teachers aim to equip their students with the building blocks needed to become proficient readers. This theme also emphasizes the need for novice teachers to have a strong understanding of the components of literacy when they leave their Education Preparation Programs. These programs must recognize the need for a methodical, evidence-based approach to literacy instruction.

Theme 2: Various Types of Reading Materials

Novice teachers incorporate a wide variety of reading materials into their literacy instruction in the classroom. These materials include Textbooks or Basals curriculums, novels, read-alouds, and big books. From the lengthy list of reading materials, it became apparent that providing rich reading experiences makes reading enjoyable and engaging, depending on the grade level. The thematic emphasis of the reading materials also points to the evolving nature of literacy instruction and the need for Education Preparation Programs to evolve with those needs by equipping preservice teachers with the knowledge and skills of evidence-based knowledge to select and use a wide range of texts to meet the needs of all learners. This would mean that higher education faculty need to

move beyond traditional experience-based methods and embrace a researched, evidence-based method of instruction that prepares novice educators to be prepared for the modern world of literacy education.

The analysis of the various texts deemed beneficial shed light on a notable omission of the use of decodable readers. These readers are fundamental for the development of phonics skills for early readers in Kindergarten through First grade. Decodable readers are specifically designed to align with phonics skills, enabling students to apply their understanding of sound-letter relationships and read more complex texts.

The absence of decodable readers in the literacy instruction strategies mentioned above raises important questions about their integration and emphasis within Educator Preparation Programs. Given the role of decodable readers in early literacy instruction, the omission of decodables from novice teachers could suggest a gap in their preparation to implement phonics instruction in their future classrooms effectively. Also, this highlights the importance of providing novice teachers with comprehensive tools encompassing a range of instructional resources tailored to meet the needs of all early readers.

Theme 3: Online Resources

The utilization and reliance on online resources by novice teachers illuminate the value these teachers put on the resources for literacy instruction. Digital tools offer a plethora of benefits that traditional materials cannot match, such as immediate access to differentiated content, interactive learning experiences, real-time progress monitoring, and adaptive material. Platforms identified in the survey comments deemed beneficial to

literacy instruction are *Prodigy ELA, Common Lit, Epic! Reading is Fundamental* (RIF), *Hand2Mind*, and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). The adaptability of online resources is a key factor in the effectiveness of literacy instruction. They also provide engaging material and skill-appropriate differentiation tailored to students' individual needs. Also, the ease of progress monitoring allows teachers to track student performance and facilitate timely interventions where needed.

Another advantage resonating with novice teachers is the ability to expand the range of materials available. With just a few clicks, teachers can access texts, instructional videos, and interactive activities that may not be available to them in their physical classroom. This can enrich the experiences of their students and provide them with new opportunities to explore topics of interest, engaging them and motivating their learning.

The integration of online resources into preservice courses and curricula can help novice teachers navigate the complexities of literacy instruction in our technology-driven world. The preparation of using online sources could ensure novice teachers are equipped and comfortable using these resources and integrating these tools into their teaching strategies to enhance and deepen student learning in literacy. The emphasis on online resources plays a pivotal role in literacy instruction. Teachers need an understanding of how to harness the power of digital tools to strengthen and enrich their literacy instruction to improve student outcomes.

Research Question 3: How do novice teachers perceive the methods used by faculty in teaching literacy instruction?

This research question sought to understand what novice teachers valued in their foundational courses and which methods helped them feel prepared to teach literacy. Three themes emerged from the interviews and survey answers. The themes are practical application and hands-on experiences, structured literacy, and differentiation for students collectively, which offer the researcher a comprehensive view of beneficial instructional techniques for literacy instruction.

Theme 1: Practical Application and Hands-on Experiences

The perspectives of novice teachers offer crucial insights into the perceived effectiveness of current instructional techniques in literacy education. In answer to the second research question, novice teachers overwhelmingly prefer hands-on, practical experiences to complement their coursework. These real-world interactions, including tutoring and observations, provide emerging teachers with invaluable insights and practical knowledge that theoretical learning cannot fully encompass. Novice teachers feel that more time spent in actual classroom settings would better equip them for future educator roles. In addition, this theme consistently resonates across various accounts, highlighting the critical gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in current teacher training programs. Novice teachers articulate the significant benefits of engaging in real-time teaching and learning scenarios, emphasizing the irreplaceable value of direct student interactions. For instance, tutoring hours at local schools are cited as highly beneficial, providing them with firsthand insights into the complexities of literacy instruction and the diverse learning needs of students. Those not taking a traditional teaching route must emphasize the importance of on-the-job training.

Despite its challenges, on-the-job training offers novice teachers an immediate and in-depth understanding of literacy instruction. Novice teachers highlight the disparity between theoretical learning and practical application, accentuating the importance of practicing these tools thoroughly before managing their classrooms. Considering the insights gathered, the hands-on component in preservice teacher training programs is essential. Providing novice teachers with rich, varied, and extensive practical experiences will enhance their skills and confidence and contribute significantly to their overall effectiveness as reading teachers. When teachers are better equipped to navigate the multifaceted world of literacy instruction, they can positively impact literacy outcomes and benefit their future students.

Theme 2: Structured Literacy

In terms of instructional techniques, novice teachers place immense value on structured literacy as an essential component of their initial training. They believe a solid foundation in structured literacy, including explicit instruction in decoding skills, phonics, and phonemic awareness, is non-negotiable for effective literacy instruction. Many express concerns about the apparent oversight of structured literacy in their training programs, stressing the urgent need to integrate it more thoroughly into the curriculum. Novice teachers express the need for a robust focus on these areas, citing the importance of a solid foundation for all students, particularly those struggling with reading. Despite its many benefits, some novice teachers express concerns regarding implementing structured literacy, particularly noting a need for more precise understanding and training in effective structured literacy instruction. The emphasis on other approaches, such as balanced literacy, sometimes leaves novice teachers needing

clarification about effectively implementing structured literacy strategies. Novice teachers also pointed out that they have a moral responsibility to ensure all students develop essential literacy skills. Structured literacy ensures that all students, including those with specific reading difficulties, receive the instruction they need to succeed.

Theme 3: Differentiation for Struggling Students

Novice teachers emphasize the importance of learning to differentiate instruction for diverse learners through data-driven methods. They highlight their unpreparedness when faced with the range of reading levels and abilities within a single grade. Despite exposure to various teaching strategies, there needs to be more training on effectively implementing these techniques, especially for struggling readers. Novice teachers are concerned about their preparedness to effectively differentiate instruction for diverse learners, particularly those struggling with reading. Novice teachers highlight the challenge of encountering a vast range of reading levels and abilities within a single classroom. While some novice teachers have gained practical skills such as administering reading-level assessments and utilizing Lexile measures to differentiate learning, others point out notable gaps in their training. They desire more comprehensive training in effective differentiation strategies, particularly concerning structured literacy instruction for struggling students. The theme of differentiation for struggling students emerges as a pivotal aspect of novice teachers' perceptions and experiences in literacy instruction. While novice teachers acknowledge the importance of differentiation and express value for strategies such as data-driven instruction and specialized support, they also highlight significant gaps in the training and preparation in these areas.

Research Question 4: How are the five components of literacy taught in preparation programs?

Various sources, including questionnaires, novice teacher and faculty interviews, and university syllabi, provided the data for a detailed exploration and analysis to understand how preparation programs teach the five components of literacy - phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Two distinct themes emerged from the collected data.

Theme 1: Inconsistency in Teaching of the Five Components of Literacy

The first theme highlights a significant concern: the omission of comprehensive instruction of the five components of literacy within foundational literacy courses offered by educational preparation programs. Observed in the syllabi, surveys, and interviews, various faculty members are utilizing diverse materials and tools or emphasizing alternative literacy concepts without giving adequate attention to the fundamental components. For instance, Faculty 2 and 4 have opted for different instructional materials and themes, omitting essential literacy elements. Novice teachers corroborate this finding, revealing a considerable gap in their educational preparation, with an overwhelming majority needing comprehensive instruction on early reading components. Controversial opinions on structured literacy further muddy the water, contributing to the inconsistency in literacy instruction across preparation programs. This inconsistency reflects a fragmented approach to literacy education that leaves novice teachers unprepared to address their future students' diverse literacy needs effectively. For instance, some courses may focus on phonemic awareness and phonics but fail to address fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Alternatively, they may concentrate solely on

comprehension and leave out the foundational phonemic awareness and phonics skills. Such partial inclusion can limit the holistic understanding and application of literacy skills in real-world educational contexts. Faculty might prioritize certain aspects like language development and leave out other critical components, creating a gap in the literacy education that teachers receive. Novice teachers often report feeling underprepared in certain areas of literacy instruction, due to this incomplete inclusion. With comprehensive training in all five literacy components, novice teachers gain the tools and knowledge to foster literacy effectively among their students. This lack of preparation can contribute to substandard literacy outcomes in the classroom and exacerbate educational inequalities. Addressing the incomplete inclusion of the five components of literacy in academic preparation programs is crucial for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of literacy education, ensuring that all teachers are well-equipped to support the literacy development of their students, therefore supporting improved educational outcomes and narrowing the literacy achievement gap.

Research Question 5: How do instructors perceive preservice teachers' knowledge and preparedness compared to new teachers' perceptions of learning and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?

To address research question five, "How do the instructors' perceptions of preservice teachers' knowledge and preparedness compare to new teachers' perceptions of learning and preparedness to teach foundational literacy?" The data shows that a considerable gap exists between instructor perceptions and novice teachers' real-world experiences. This disconnection, highlighted in the emerging themes, highlights the

urgent need to revisit and revamp current educational training approaches to better align with the actual requirements of literacy instruction in classrooms.

Theme 1: A Significant Discrepancy Between Instructor Perceptions and Novice Teachers' Experiences

The first theme highlights a marked disparity between the instructors' beliefs regarding their students' preparedness and reality, as recounted by novice teachers. The overwhelming sentiment among new teachers is a need for more preparedness to teach reading, contrasting sharply with the instructor's perception. Despite formal training, numerous novice teachers expressed unpreparedness and uncertainty, indicating a significant lapse in the training programs. Novice Teacher 2's experience, especially telling, where despite formal qualifications, the lack of foundational literacy training led to feelings of inadequacy and struggle in natural classroom environments. The evident expectation gap versus reality stresses the need to reevaluate and enhance teacher preparation programs' curricular focus and instructional strategies.

Theme 1: The Pressing Need for Enhanced Training

This theme shows the universal call for more extensive and comprehensive training for preservice teachers. Despite existing instructional programs, faculty and novice teachers must pay more attention to current practices in fully equipping teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge for effective literacy instruction. Faculty Interview 1 and others emphasize the importance of a more comprehensive approach to literacy education, incorporating all aspects of structured literacy to ensure comprehensive preparedness among novice teachers. Despite current preservice training,

the echoes of insufficient preparation further emphasize the necessity for a thorough

review and enhancement of existing educational training programs.

Investigating the alignment of instructor perceptions and novice teacher

experiences reveals critical gaps in the current educational preparation paradigm. The

pronounced disparity between instructor beliefs and novice teacher experiences

highlights a troubling lack of alignment between academic training and actual classroom

requirements, leaving novice teachers feeling underprepared and ineffective. Aligning

instructor perceptions, curricular content, and instructional strategies with classroom

literacy instruction's basic needs and challenges is paramount. Alignment is essential for

ensuring novice teacher preparedness and effectiveness and fostering optimal student

literacy outcomes, laying the foundation for their long-term academic and life successes.

In conclusion, the comprehensive exploration of the various aspects of literacy

education in preparation programs provides critical insights into the current state of

literacy instruction and its alignment with evidence-based best practices. Analyzing the

different research questions and themes reveals crucial gaps, discrepancies, and areas of

concern that demand attention and remediation. The research highlights a notable discord

in the instruction of the five fundamental literacy components - phonemic awareness,

phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. The findings illustrate a fragmented

approach to literacy education, leaving a significant portion of novice teachers feeling

underprepared and uncertain in their ability to impart literacy skills to their students

effectively. This disconnects between the preparation programs and practical literacy

instruction needs reflects a substantial gap in the current educational framework,

necessitating an urgent review and restructuring to ensure a holistic and comprehensive literacy education.

Moreover, the evident disparity between the instructors' perceptions and the experiences of new teachers further underscores the need for a more aligned and cohesive approach to literacy instruction in preparation programs. The collective feedback from faculty and novice teachers highlights the essential requirement for increased training, particularly in foundational literacy components. The increased focus on training and development will help bridge the existing gaps and ensure that new teachers are better equipped and more confident in their literacy instruction capabilities.

In summary, the comprehensive investigation illuminates vital areas within literacy education that require immediate attention, highlighting the need for a united and concerted effort from all stakeholders to enhance the quality and effectiveness of literacy instruction preparation programs. This endeavor is necessary for future generations' holistic development and academic success, cementing the foundation for a more literate, informed, and empowered society.

Findings Related to Literature Review

The outcomes of this study correspond with the existing literature review, emphasizing significant lapses in teacher preparation programs regarding the resources utilized, methods of student evaluation, and the academic depth of knowledge and its practical application. Lenski et al. (2013) examined how literacy programs varied and prioritized essential elements across curricula. Key elements identified were structured and balanced literacy, differentiating student learning, and implementing various instructional strategies. Although these elements are beneficial, research by Wolsey and

colleagues (2013) involving over 300 teacher candidates revealed that while most believed they had a good grasp of educational standards, they needed to improve in foundational literacy skills despite their confidence in the curriculum and teaching methods.

The National Reading Panel (2000) outlines the qualifications for an expert reading teacher, emphasizing a solid understanding of the content and the practical application of literacy's five components of literacy: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, fluency, and reading comprehension. The finding of this study shows the demand for more comprehensive reading coursework, as evidenced by the interviews, where participants and faculty needed to recognize the five components of literacy. These findings also stress the importance of merging pedagogical content knowledge with instructional practices, especially for diverse learning needs, a sentiment echoed by new teachers who entered the profession through alternative certification pathways, as well as traditional graduates. Griffith, Bauml, and Barksdale (2015) argue that for novice teachers to evolve into competent reading instructors, they must acquire knowledge and understanding of literacy and the pedagogy of reading instruction. Risko and Reid (2019), who suggest that quality literacy teacher preparation should provide both coursework and practical experience to develop a foundational literacy skillset in preservice teachers, reinforce this idea.

Furthermore, there needs to be more clarity among university faculty regarding structured literacy, with some neglecting to teach all literacy components. Joshi et al.'s research at Texas A&M presented findings from a study by David Kilpatrick, which showed an 80% confusion rate among instructors between phonemic awareness and

phonics. Additionally, there is a need for more familiarity with evidence-based reading

instruction research, which the study also mirrored. Joshi et al. (2009) found that while

teacher educators could display syllabic knowledge, they needed help with morphology

and phonemes and often misidentified phonological awareness as merely letter-sound

correspondence. The study parallels literature that points to a disparity between university

faculty perceptions and novice teachers' experiences. Kosnik and Beck (2008) found a

need for more alignment between the theoretical coursework and the practical needs of

novice teachers, leaving them underprepared for effective literacy instruction. Echoing

this sentiment, Moats (1999) articulated the necessity for teacher education programs to

build a robust foundation in literacy expertise, including a comprehensive understanding

of reading instruction terminology. This goal often needs to be met in current programs.

Moats also asserts, "Few teachers are sufficiently well prepared to carry out such

instruction due to their preparation programs" (p. 14).

  In conclusion, this study's findings reflect previous research that points to a

critical need for restructuring and enhancing teacher preparation programs to bridge the

gap between preservice training and practical classroom demands. Despite the

acknowledgment of certain effective practices within existing programs, there still needs

to be more comprehensive, evidence-based literacy training, particularly in the

application of the five components of literacy as outlined by the National Reading Panel.

The disconnect between faculty perceptions and the actual experiences of novice teachers

in structured literacy accentuates the necessity for a curriculum that not only presents

theoretical knowledge but also equips teachers with the practical skills and understanding

to apply this literacy knowledge in diverse classroom settings. The clarity about the

content and methodological structures of literacy, such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension development, is crucial for developing competent, confident educators capable of addressing the unique needs of each student.

The results of this study align with the sentiments of researchers like Griffith et al. (2015) and Moats (1999), who advocate for an integrated approach to teacher education that combines deep pedagogical knowledge and practicums for preservice teachers. The findings in this study suggest that such integration still needs to be improved. That significant work remains to ensure that new teachers are as well prepared to foster literacy development in their future classrooms. Ultimately, the goal must be to provide a continuum of learning that begins in teacher preparation programs and extends into the practical field, ensuring a seamless transition for preservice teachers into effective literacy educators.

Relating to the Theoretical Framework

Teaching reading effectively as a novice teacher requires preparation and ongoing support to develop the specialized knowledge needed to deliver effective instruction. Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge theory served as a framework, as did Moats' theory of teacher preparation being a crucial step in reducing reading problems. Shulman (1986) posited that pedagogical content knowledge is considered a "special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their special form of professional understanding" (p. 8). In other words, teachers must know the subject that they teach. Shulman's work highlighted the significance of teacher content knowledge and examined teacher preparation regarding pedagogical content knowledge and the need for teachers to deeply acquire pedagogical content knowledge of reading (Shulman,

1986). The idea of deeper pedagogy reflects the significance of continuing to evaluate the most effective way to support teachers as they develop a knowledge base of content in reading instruction. Shulman's study (1986) advanced teacher knowledge by showing the connection between content and pedagogical knowledge as being taught separately. Pedagogical content knowledge concerns how a teacher applies what they know about teaching and what they know about the subject matter. This integration of pedagogy and content aligns with and transfers into professional practice (Shulman, 1986). Teachers with a sturdy foundation of literacy content are better prepared to differentiate reading instruction. Shulman's pedagogical content knowledge theory aligns with this study; the participants' responses, interviews, and document analysis reflect a need for a deepened knowledge base for teaching reading. The current study finds that participants consistently reflect on the necessity of deepening their pedagogical content knowledge to enhance the efficacy of reading instruction. The evidence suggests that without a robust foundation in both the theoretical and practical dimensions of literacy education, beginning teachers may encounter challenges that can impede the delivery of high-quality teaching and consequently affect student literacy outcomes.

Considering these findings, the pedagogical content knowledge framework serves as a pivotal anchor for this study and calls for continuous reevaluation of teacher education programs. Such programs must ensure that they effectively equip educators with the understanding required to translate literacy theory into classroom practice. This alignment between theoretical frameworks and practical application is paramount for fostering excellence and bolstering student achievement in reading.

Implications

The findings of this study shed essential light on the state of literacy instruction in Missouri preparation programs, revealing crucial gaps and highlighting opportunities for enhancement and reform. The exploration points out significant disparities in the perception of readiness to teach foundational literacy between instructors and novice teachers. This discordance, coupled with the incomplete and fragmented teaching of the five components of literacy, shows a pressing need for a comprehensive reevaluation and careful examination of current educational approaches and curricula. The emphasis on professional development further stresses the imperative for a holistic, integrated approach to literacy education that is both inclusive and robust.

In exploring these implications, the focus extends beyond the immediate educational context, reaching into the scope of new policies, educational equity, and long-term societal advancement for Missouri students. The enlightenment of these implications is needed to spark the transformations in the higher academic realms, laying the groundwork for the reconstruction of impactful teacher preparation programs in Missouri.

The first discussion implication I would like to focus on is the disparity between university faculty and novice teachers' perceptions. The university faculty felt overwhelmingly confident that their students would be prepared to teach reading in the classroom. In contrast, the novice teachers felt anything but secure when faced with reading instruction. Many struggle once they enter the classroom knowing how and when to teach the components of literacy, what to do with their struggling readers, or how to differentiate their instruction correctly. The researcher did not expect the heartfelt angst

expressed by novice teachers about not feeling efficient in teaching students reading.

Knowing that 66% of fourth-grade students scored at or below basic in reading on the

NAEP assessment, it is apparent that preservice teachers need to get the right kind of

literacy preparation in their foundational methods courses. According to the study,

beginning teachers who took a nontraditional route to certification reflected the need even

more to merge deep pedagogical content knowledge with teaching practices and

differentiate decision-making for diverse learners. Griffith et al. (2015) posit that for

beginning teachers to develop into effective reading instructors, they must gain

knowledge and understanding of literacy and the pedagogy of reading instruction. Deep

pedagogical content knowledge supports Risko and Reid's (2019) acknowledgment that

high-quality literacy teacher preparation must offer coursework and fieldwork that

sufficiently develop foundational expertise in preservice teachers. Children bring a wide

range of competencies that demand teachers negotiate gaps in learning, differentiate

needs, and provide feedback throughout lessons (Griffith et al., 2015). The novice teacher

who experienced an entire year of student teaching felt highly prepared to teach reading

due to the mentoring of her cooperating teacher, which supports Risko and Reid's

acknowledgment of EPPs offering sufficient fieldwork opportunities.

The pressing realities of literacy education, as revealed by this study, carry

profound implications for educator preparation programs and the students of Missouri.

All stakeholders in the educational arena must respond robustly to these implications, as

explored below. First, the dire literacy proficiency rates, especially among our students of

color and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, show the urgent need to revamp

literacy instruction methodologies. Educator preparation programs must take the lead in

integrating effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the needs of the students. The current statistics reflect a crisis in reading proficiency and signify a deeper systematic issue that extends beyond individual classrooms and schools.

Secondly, there is an unmistakable call for teacher preparation programs to reevaluate and reform their curricula. The study highlights a disconnection between the content offered in these programs and the effective literacy instruction practices recommended by educational authorities, such as the National Reading Panel. A comprehensive curriculum redesign is imperative, one that equips preservice teachers with robust, evidence-based literacy instruction techniques. A focal point that requires immediate attention is the development of early literacy skills. Missouri's educator preparation programs currently need to improve in teaching phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension foundational skills crucial for reading success. Not just parts and pieces of these skills. This finding indicates a substantial gap in the state's educational approach, which, if addressed, is likely to perpetuate the cycle of low literacy proficiency. Moreover, selecting instructional materials for educator preparation programs warrants a critical evaluation. The study's critique of the textbooks points to the necessity of a selection process ensuring the use of all five of the literacy components that align with the most current understanding of literacy acquisition.

Research and development in literacy education should be an ongoing endeavor. Persistent efforts to monitor and assess the effectiveness of literacy education initiatives in teacher preparation programs are vital for ensuring alignment with the latest educational needs and evidence-based practices. Furthermore, the association between reading proficiency and high school dropout rates signals a crisis that extends beyond the

realm of education into the fabric of society. Early intervention programs that support

struggling readers are not just an educational imperative but a social one, with potential

implications for future workforce and economic health. Closing the achievement gap also

demands a focus on equity and access. The study highlights the necessity to address the

systemic inequalities that impact our minority students, English language learners, and

students in poverty, ensuring equitable access to high-quality literacy instruction for all.

Collaboration between universities and K-12 schools is indispensable. There is a critical

need for a seamless integration of theory and practice, ensuring that the pedagogical

strategies taught in universities are both relevant and effective in the practical settings of

the classroom.

In conclusion, the implications drawn from the study serve as a demand for action

for the comprehensive reform in literacy education within educator preparation programs.

We must take a strategic, data-informed, student-centered approach to literacy

instruction. There is potential to improve the trajectory of reading proficiency and

empower future generations with literacy skills necessary for personal and societal

advancement.

Implications for Further Research

The implications for further research from this study are multifaceted and suggest

several avenues for further inquiry within literacy education and teacher preparation. The

first area of interest arises from the need to understand better the intricacies of reading

instruction and the depth of pedagogical knowledge required. The discourse and feedback

from university faculty and novice teachers highlight a significant gap in research

regarding the interaction of preservice training and professional practice. This researcher

has been working with a small university in Missouri to implement a tutoring program for preservice teachers. Katie Pace-Miles created the tutoring program and utilized it with preservice teachers to offer intervention for students affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The tutoring program provided high-quality training for the preservice teachers and evidence-based instruction for students. According to Miles and Fletcher (2023), preservice teachers who engaged in this program and implemented its strategies in their practicum reported a heightened sense of preparedness for classroom literacy instruction. The foundational literacy instructor in Missouri shared the same sentiment as her preservice teachers. Future researchers should explore ways to synchronize these two crucial phases of teacher development to guarantee a smooth and pragmatic shift from learning to teaching literacy.

Next, the voices of novice teachers who have entered the profession through alternative certification routes have shed light on unique challenges and experiences. Their perspectives suggest an under-researched area that warrants attention: the specific needs of nontraditional educators in literacy instruction. Investigating these needs could provide invaluable insights into tailoring support systems within school districts that aid these educators and enhance the educational outcomes of their students.

Additionally, the recommendations to extend the research duration and broaden the participant pool are a logical progression for future studies. A more extended study period would allow for longitudinal data collection, which could provide a more robust and dynamic understanding of the impacts of teacher preparation over time. In addition, including a more extensive and diverse group of participants would also strengthen the findings, offering a broader scope of understanding that could inform strategies for

literacy instruction. These implications highlight the necessity for ongoing, rigorous research to confront the challenges in literacy education. Such research is essential for academic discourse and can shape effective educational policies and practices that can transform literacy outcomes for students across Missouri. There is a clear directive for future research to explore integrating such innovative training programs with the broader scope of teacher development. Investigating how best to synchronize teacher education's theoretical and practical phases is essential for facilitating a smooth and competent transition from the academic environment to the literacy classroom.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented for enhancing Missouri educator preparation programs, drawing upon the insights gained from data analysis, the theoretical underpinnings of the study, and its broader implications. The researcher recommends that university faculty members who teach foundational literacy courses undergo complete LETRS (Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling) training or another Science of Reading accredited course embracing Shulman's theoretical framework of pedagogical content knowledge. Furthermore, initiatives, such as Missouri Read, Lead, and Exceed should extend their scope to incorporate university faculty, supporting the overarching goal of providing Missouri educators with a robust comprehension of the science of reading.

Next, incorporating LETRS training as a prerequisite for preservice teachers, including those on nontraditional tracks, could significantly enrich the pedagogical content knowledge in reading instruction. Such a requirement would be instrumental in equipping preservice teachers with the necessary skills to educate diverse learners

effectively. Additionally, tailored professional development and support should be made available to nontraditional educators entering the profession via routes such as the ABC Teach program so that these educators are equally prepared to provide high-quality reading instruction from the outset of their careers.

Finally, it is advisable to integrate a similar tutoring program into the preparatory curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practice further. The innovative program conceived by Katie Pace-Miles has proven effective in providing preservice teachers with essential, quality instruction and practical, evidence-based tutoring experience. Preservice teachers who participated in this program and contributed to the instructional process during their practicum expressed a heightened level of readiness for classroom literacy instruction, which also benefited the students being tutored.

Summary

This qualitative study examined higher education institutions' curriculums to prepare preservice teachers and how the programs align with research. In addition, the researcher compared educator preparation instructors' perceptions of their students' efficacy of reading instruction against how new teachers feel about their ability to teach reading. The researcher analyzed the curriculums of the universities using a rubric and collected the perceptions of all participants through a questionnaire and interviews. This study held significance because it added to the research of Missouri educator preparation programs and furthered the research of faculty and novice teachers' perceptions of their readiness to teach reading.

Chapter One included the background for the study, which explained that reading is a crucial foundation for children to become successful learners and is a complex

process that comprises various skills, including vocabulary, phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension (Moats, 2020). Learning to read is crucial and transforms lives. Reading is the cornerstone for acquiring knowledge, cultural understanding, democracy, and success in the workplace. The researcher provided the theoretical framework, formulated the problem statement, defined the purpose of the study, and developed the research questions in an active voice. The study's definitions, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions are also included.

Chapter Two included the literature review. It discussed the background of reading instruction, the evolution of teacher preparation, policies, and research on reading instruction. Chapter Two also included the impact of teacher preparation on student reading achievement. The researcher explored only teacher preparation programs in Missouri, which resulted in a small sample size for the theoretical framework. The researcher further explored how teachers must develop a deep knowledge of content to be effective instructors of reading (Shulman, 1986).

Chapter Three began with a discussion of the problem and the purpose of the study. Then, the researcher addressed the design's methodology and reasoning for choosing the design. Next, the researcher restated the questions, followed by a description of the population, the sample size, and the reason behind those choices. Then, the researcher included a detailed description of the instruments used to collect data, including an explanation of their reliability and validity. The researcher outlined the analytic framework and discussed the steps taken to ensure the ethical integrity of the research while addressing bias and reflexivity.

Chapter Four provided a discussion of the study's results. Participants answered questions designed for data gathering on foundational literacy courses, course design and materials, and participants' philosophy of reading instruction. The surveys also inquired about the teacher educators' course syllabi. Consequently, the interviews asked for information on variables such as course design and materials, the participants' philosophies for reading instruction, and the participants' preparedness to teach reading. Finally, the researcher assessed each syllabus to obtain information on emergent literacy, language arts methods, content area literacy, the foundations of literacy and language, and the assessment and remediation of reading problems.

Chapter Five included the findings and conclusions of the study. During the discussion, the researcher discussed how the framework impacts the teaching of reading from foundational literacy courses in educator preparation programs, emphasizing the need for deep pedagogical content knowledge and making recommendations for higher-education faculty, preservice teachers, and nontraditional educators to improve their teaching practices. During the discussion, the researcher also discussed the implications of the framework on the deep pedagogical content knowledge that educators need to teach reading from foundational literacy courses effectively and, in addition, highlighted the need for further research and future studies in this area. The researcher also discussed the implications for further research and made recommendations for higher-education faculty, preservice teachers, and nontraditional educators. In conclusion, the findings of this study reflect the disconnect between educator preparation programs and novice teachers, the need for curriculum alignment across the state for EPPs, and support for nontraditional educators entering the classroom.

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Appendix A

Script for Email Recruitment for Novice Teachers

Greetings,

 I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I would like to ask your permission to survey new teachers (1-5 years) at your institution for my study.

 I am conducting this study to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy in Missouri. Also, I would like to learn about faculty practices that help improve preservice learning and student literacy. There will be no identifying information included in the study.

If you could please forward the survey to teachers that have been practicing 1 – 5 years, I would be grateful. I have attached the information letter. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Melinda Odom

Appendix B

Script for Email Recruitment for University Faculty

Greetings,

 I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University. I would like to ask your permission to survey new teachers (1-5 years) at your institution for my study.

 I am conducting this study to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy in Missouri. Also, I would like to learn about faculty practices that help improve preservice learning and student literacy. There will be no identifying information included in the study.

If you could please forward the survey faculty that teaches Foundational Literacy Courses in Educator Preparation Programs, I would be grateful. I have attached the information letter. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you for your consideration,

Sincerely,

Melinda Odom

Appendix C

Introductory Protocol for Faculty

In order to take notes, I would like to record our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher and dissertation committee on the project will be privy to the interviews, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. I wish to be cognizant of your time, so I have planned this interview to last no longer than 45 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to have answered. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have indicated on the initial survey form that you would be willing to participate in an interview. The purpose of this study is to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy. This study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, the researcher is trying to learn more about teaching and learning, and hopefully learn about faculty practices that help improve preservice learning and student literacy.

- How long have you been in your present position?

- Can you describe your background in education?

- Briefly describe your current role as it relates to student learning and assessment (if appropriate).

- How do you design your course, and/or assessment techniques in your teaching?

- How do you decide on course materials, and do you have autonomy in what you choose?

- Can you describe how you incorporate the five components of literacy into your course?

- Are you familiar with "Reading Wars"? (If yes, describe. If not, skip).

- How do you describe balanced literacy?

- How do you describe structured literacy?

- Which approach best fits your teaching philosophy?

- How do you go about assessing whether students grasp the material in your class?

- What techniques tell you the most about what students are learning?

- How do you keep up with current literacy trends?

- Do you have access to professional development and how do you feel about it?

- When preservice teachers leave your class, do you feel they are prepared to teach beginning reading to students? Can you please explain your answer?

- Do you have anything else that you would like to tell me?

Appendix D

Introductory Protocol for Teachers

In order to take notes, I would like to record our conversations today. For your information, only the researcher and dissertation committee on the project will be privy to the interviews, which will be eventually destroyed after they are transcribed. I wish to be cognizant of your time, so I have planned this interview to last no longer than 45 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to have answered. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you to push ahead and complete this line of questioning.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today because you have indicated on the initial survey form that you would be willing to participate in an interview. The purpose of this study is to analyze foundational literacy courses in teacher preparation courses and how they teach the components of literacy. This study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, the researcher is trying to learn more about teaching and learning, and hopefully learn about faculty practices that help improve preservice learning and student literacy.

- How long have you been in your present position?

- Can you describe your background in education?

- Briefly describe your current role as it relates to student learning and assessment (if appropriate).

- How do you design your course, and/or assessment techniques in your teaching?

- How do you decide on course materials, and do you have autonomy in what you choose?

- Can you describe how you incorporate the five components of literacy into your course?

- Are you familiar with "Reading Wars"? (If yes, describe. If not, skip).

- How do you describe balanced literacy?

- How do you describe structured literacy?

- Which approach best fits your teaching philosophy?

- How do you go about assessing whether students grasp the material in your class?

- What techniques tell you the most about what students are learning?

- How do you keep up with current literacy trends?

- Do you have access to professional development and how do you feel about it?

- When preservice teachers leave your class, do you feel they are prepared to teach beginning reading to students? Can you please explain your answer?

- Do you have anything else that you would like to tell me?

Appendix E

	3	2	1	0	Score
Five Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	
Total Score					

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Avila

Appendix F

ED343

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

13

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Avila

Appendix F

Appendix G

ED 341

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

9

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Avila

Appendix G

Appendix H

ED 370

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

9

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Aella

Appendix H

Appendix I

Edu 2343

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

5

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Appendix I

Appendix J

Edu 3013

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	(Mentions 2 or less components)	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		(Does not mention any theorists)	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		(Does not mention a philosophy)	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	(All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components)	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	(One assignment required demonstration of components)	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

4

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	(Very Low)

Avila

Appendix J

Appendix K
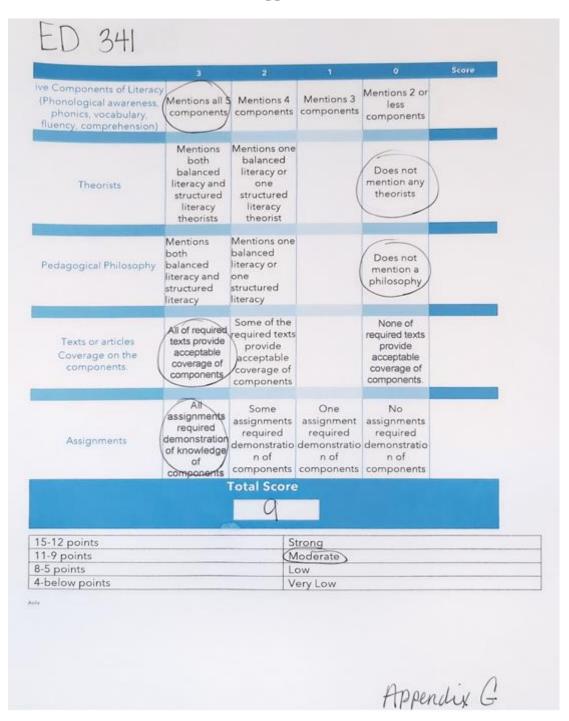
EDU 3613

	3	2	1	0	Score
ive Components of Literacy (Phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension)	Mentions all 5 components	Mentions 4 components	Mentions 3 components	Mentions 2 or less components	
Theorists	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy theorists	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy theorist		Does not mention any theorists	
Pedagogical Philosophy	Mentions both balanced literacy and structured literacy	Mentions one balanced literacy or one structured literacy		Does not mention a philosophy	
Texts or articles Coverage on the components.	All of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components	Some of the required texts provide acceptable coverage of components		None of required texts provide acceptable coverage of components.	
Assignments	All assignments required demonstration of knowledge of components	Some assignments required demonstration of components	One assignment required demonstration of components	No assignments required demonstration of components	

Total Score

15-12 points	Strong
11-9 points	Moderate
8-5 points	Low
4-below points	Very Low

Aulia
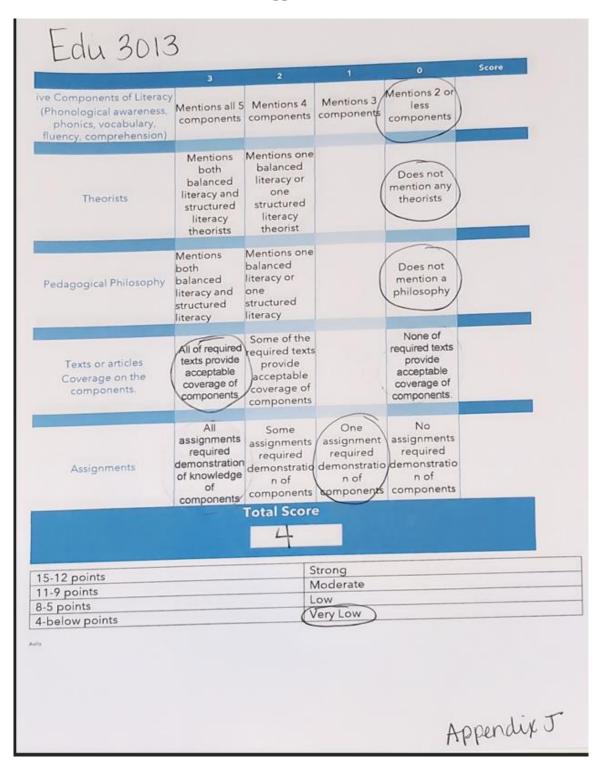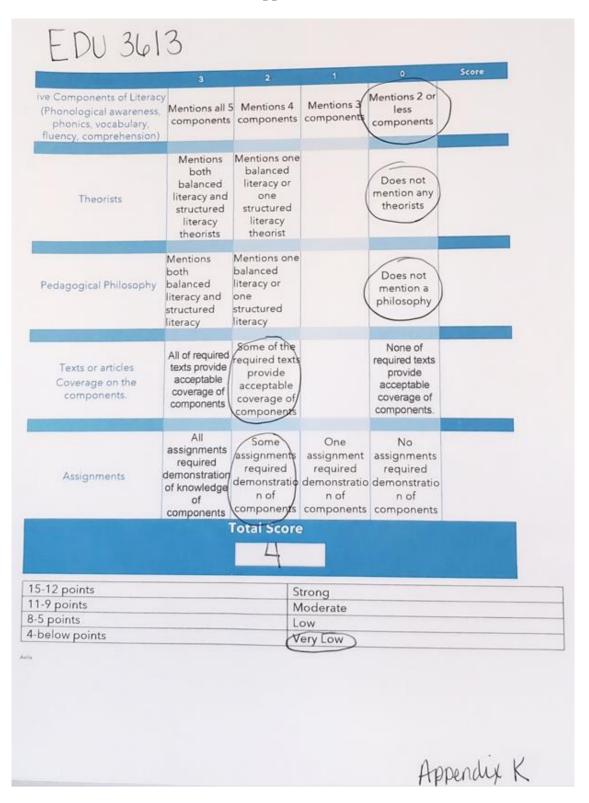
Appendix K

Vitae

Melinda Odom

Melinda Odom obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Southwest Baptist University in 2012 with an additional certification in Early Childhood Education. She began her career as a kindergarten teacher for one year in Summersville, Mo., before relocating to Branson, Mo. She taught fifth grade at Hollister Elementary for seven years, while earning her Master's Degree in Educational Leadership from Lindenwood University. She spent two years teaching sixth grade for Branson R-IV schools before becoming a K-12 Literacy Specialist for the Agency of Teaching, Leading, and Learning for Missouri State University in 2021.