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by

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Being a literacy teacher: The first year

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Abstract

In this thesis I present an investigation of the experiences of 14 beginning primary school teachers in their first year of teaching. Using an inductive qualitative methodology, data was collected through multiple observations and interviews with the participants over 16 months, augmented with researcher notes, site documents and participant surveys. The key findings indicate these teachers were frustrated by their inability to enact their visions of themselves as teachers. These frustrations were attributable to their lack of teacher knowledge across a variety of knowledge domains, and a lack of coherent support in the schools in which they were employed.

The thesis presents two frameworks through which these findings can be understood, and responded to. The first is a conceptual framework which links the spirit of teaching to the substance of teaching, using two Greek concepts – ‘pneuma’, which is the spirit, and ‘pragma’, which is the substance. The second framework is a structural one that describes how an alignment between ‘pneuma’ and ‘pragma’ can be achieved whilst simultaneously filling teachers’ knowledge gaps. In this framework, teacher education is represented as an enterprise that is contiguous across the multiple contexts of self, university, practicum and employment. Teacher education is a continuous endeavour that has already begun before prospective teachers enter their teacher preparation courses and continues until they leave the profession.

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Preface

I would like to acknowledge the following people who have helped bring this thesis to fruition.

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Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Certificate of Authorship.....	v
Preface.....	vii
Table of Contents.....	ix
List of Figures.....	xiii
Chapter One.....	1
Purpose of the Study	1
Context for the Study	2
Significance of the Study	4
Focus of the Study	6
Theoretical Perspectives in the Study	7
Overview of the Methods	9
Organisation of the Thesis	11
Definition of Terms	13
Chapter Two — Literature Review.....	15
Beginning-teacher Knowledge for Effective Literacy Teaching	15
Knowledge about Content.....	18
Knowledge about Theory	20
Knowledge about Teaching	22
Knowledge about Learners	23
Knowledge about School Context	27
Knowledge about Sociocultural Politics	29
Beginning-teacher Job Motivation and Attrition	31
Job Motivation	31
Teacher Attrition	38
Summary	42
Beginning-teacher Support	43
Mentoring and Induction Programs	43
Support and Self-efficacy	49
Support and the Professional Community	51
Support and Well-being	54
Summary.....	55
Teacher Preparation	55
Practice Makes Perfect.....	56
Match-making	60
The ‘Real’ World	64
Summary.....	66
Conclusion	67
Chapter Three — Methodology	69
Theoretical Perspectives	69
Choosing a Qualitative Methodology	70
Focus Areas for the Study	72
Qualitative Methods	73
Interviews.....	73
Observations, field notes and site documents.....	77
Questionnaires.....	84

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Summary	87
Research Design	87
The situated researcher.....	88
The participants.....	89
Research Process.....	91
Recruitment.....	92
The Schools.....	93
Data Collection Procedures	94
Considerations	100
Data Analysis	102
Meet the Participants	105
Conclusion	123
Chapter Four — Findings.....	125
Structure of the Chapter	125
Vision	127
Maintaining the Vision.....	128
Moving On	148
Discussion.....	153
Summary.....	157
Frustration.....	158
Lack of Autonomy	159
Discussion.....	175
Lack of Confidence	177
Discussion.....	180
Lack of Support	181
Discussion.....	200
Lack of Time and Opportunity to Teach Literacy.....	204
Discussion.....	207
Lack of Direction	208
Discussion.....	211
Lack of Knowledge	212
Summary.....	212
Knowledge	214
Knowledge about Content.....	217
Discussion.....	220
Knowledge about Theory	221
Discussion.....	225
Knowledge about Teaching	226
Discussion.....	239
Knowledge about Learners.....	240
Discussion.....	252
Knowledge about Context.....	253
Discussion.....	262
Knowledge about Sociocultural Politics	263
Discussion.....	267
Summary.....	268
Conclusion	269
Chapter Five — Interpretation	271
A Conceptual Framework — Pneuma and Pragma	272
Pneuma and Pragma.....	273
Linking Pneuma/Pragma to the Study Findings and the Literature.....	278
Summary	282
A Structural Framework: Building the Bridge between Pneuma and Pragma	283

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Teacher Knowledge and Context.....	284
Applying the Structural Framework	289
Applying the Framework to Specific Scenarios	307
Summary	310
Chapter Six — Conclusion.....	313
Recommendations	315
The Importance of pneuma	315
Autonomy in Teaching.....	318
What Teachers Should Know.....	320
Effective Teacher Preparation and Induction	322
Summary	328
Appendices	331
Appendix 1 – Participation Information Form	331
Appendix 2 – Participation Consent Form	335
Appendix 3 – Principal Information letter	337
Appendix 4 – First interview schedule	339
Appendix 5 – Interview questions following classroom observations	341
Appendix 6 – Final interview schedule	345
Appendix 7 – Online survey Term 1	347
Appendix 8 – Online survey Term 4	353
Appendix 9 – Online survey – Term 2 – Support	357
Appendix 10 – Sample of Initial coding and researcher memos	361
Appendix 11 – Schools receiving professional learning in content knowledge for literacy teaching	389
Bibliography.....	391

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

List of Figures

Figure a: Survey responses to question ‘What things might prevent you approaching your school-based mentor?’.....	190
Figure b: Survey responses to question ‘How often do you talk with your mentor about professional matters?’.....	191
Figure c: A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’...	215
Figure d(i): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher content knowledge.....	216
Figure d(ii): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher theory knowledge.....	221
Figure d(iii): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher teaching knowledge.....	226
Figure e: Term 1 survey responses to question ‘How do you feel about your teaching?’	235
Figure f: Term 4 survey responses to question ‘How do you feel about your teaching?’	235
Figure g: Survey responses to the item ‘Sources of successful literacy teaching practice’	236
Figure h: Survey responses to the item ‘Sources of unsuccessful literacy teaching practice’	237
Figure i: Term 1 survey responses to question ‘Which aspects of your literacy program are working well?’	238
Figure j: Term 4 survey responses to question ‘Which aspects of your literacy program are working well?’	239
Figure d(iv): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher learner knowledge.....	240
Figure d(v): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher school context knowledge.....	253
Figure d(vi): A diagrammatic conceptualisation of intersecting ‘ways of knowing’, applied to the knowledge domain, teacher sociopolitical knowledge.....	263
Figure k: Diagram to represent the conceptual relationship between the ‘pneuma’ and ‘pragma’ of teaching.....	275
Figure l: The pneuma–pragma framework, with knowledge domains described....	285
Figure m: The pneuma–pragma framework, with knowledge discourses and domains aligned across multiple contexts described.....	387

Being a literacy teacher: The first year

Figure n: Diagram to represent the ways in which multiple contexts are both contiguous and contingent.....290