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**THE CONTRIBUTION OF TEACHER EDUCATION TO LITERACY INSTRUCTION
QUALITY IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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Penelitian ini menganalisis hubungan antara pendidikan guru dan kualitas pengajaran literasi di sekolah dasar. Menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui tinjauan literatur dan analisis studi kasus, studi ini menemukan bahwa pendidikan guru berkontribusi signifikan terhadap peningkatan literasi siswa. Program yang efektif memiliki fondasi pedagogis yang kuat dan pengalaman praktikum yang memadai. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi kesenjangan penting, termasuk kurangnya pelatihan dalam diferensiasi dan intervensi literasi. Temuan ini menyoroti perlunya reformasi kurikulum yang berfokus pada pelatihan praktis, pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan, dan standarisasi program pendidikan guru.

Kata kunci: pendidikan guru, literasi, sekolah dasar, pengembangan profesional, kurikulum pendidikan guru.

Abstract

This study analyzes the relationship between teacher education and the quality of literacy instruction in primary schools. Employing a qualitative research design with an extensive literature review and case study analysis, the study finds that teacher education contributes significantly to improved student literacy outcomes. Effective programs feature strong pedagogical foundations and adequate practicum experiences. However, the research also identifies critical gaps, including a lack of training in differentiation and literacy interventions. These findings highlight the need for curriculum reforms that focus on practical training, continuous professional development, and the standardization of teacher education programs. Keywords: teacher education, literacy, primary school, professional development, teacher education curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Foundational literacy skills, which include reading, writing, and critical thinking, are vital for a child's academic and personal success and act as a cornerstone for lifelong learning (Andrin et al., 2024). Strong literacy skills are associated with better academic performance and the capacity for continuous learning and societal engagement (Sulamul Huda Mlarak Ponorogo Study, 2019). Despite the clear importance of literacy, many primary students, especially in underprivileged communities, still struggle to become proficient readers and writers, which hinders their educational progress and future potential (Korkmaz & Akçay, 2024). This challenge is worsened by inconsistencies in educational systems and a difficult transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Andrin et al., 2024).

A key factor in addressing these issues is the quality of teacher preparation. Effective literacy instruction depends on teachers having strong content knowledge and pedagogical skills. However, teacher education programs often fail to adequately prepare new educators with the necessary practical skills and confidence to teach literacy effectively, especially in areas like digital and information literacy (Mahoney & Kiernan, 2024; Thwe & Kalman, 2024). These gaps in training can lead to teachers entering classrooms without the skills to support diverse learners. Furthermore, many teachers do not engage in continuous professional development, which limits their ability to adapt and improve their teaching strategies over time.

This study aims to address these issues by analyzing how teacher education programs contribute to literacy instruction quality, identifying their strengths and weaknesses, and proposing strategies to improve teacher preparation and promote lifelong learning among educators. The findings will be significant for educational theory, curriculum development, and policy, as they will provide insights into strengthening teacher training to ultimately enhance student literacy outcomes and foster lifelong learning.

METHOD

To investigate the connection between teacher education and the quality of literacy instruction in primary schools, the study uses a qualitative research design that includes an extensive literature review (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Takona, 2024). This approach allows for a deep examination of teacher training models and pedagogical practices within various contexts, revealing detailed insights that might be missed by quantitative methods.

The data for this study comes from a wide variety of sources, including academic journals, policy documents, teacher education curricula, and reports from organizations like UNESCO and the OECD. Thematic analysis, a method for identifying patterns and themes in qualitative data, is applied to this information to assess how teacher preparation relates to the effectiveness of literacy teaching (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This method is crucial for pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs and developing well-informed recommendations for improving curricula and policy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

Findings on Teacher Education Programs

Teacher education programs provide a foundational understanding of pedagogy, offering future educators a critical theoretical framework for teaching. They emphasize core

teaching principles and expose students to various literacy methods, such as phonics and whole language approaches (Elyashiv & Rozenberg, 2024). Moreover, most programs include a practicum component, giving aspiring teachers direct classroom experience to apply their theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting. This hands-on training is essential for building a basic level of competence and confidence before entering the profession.

Table 1. Teacher Education Programs

| Program Component | Strengths | Weaknesses |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Pedagogical Knowledge | Strong theoretical foundation | Limited practical application |
| Literacy Methods | Exposure to various approaches | Insufficient focus on differentiation |
| Practicum Experience | Real-world application | Lack of training in interventions |

Despite these strengths, there are significant weaknesses in current teacher education curricula. A primary concern is the insufficient focus on differentiated instruction, which is a critical skill for addressing the diverse learning needs of students in modern classrooms (Ansari et al., 2024; Hatlevik, 2024). Many programs also offer limited practical training in literacy interventions for struggling readers, leaving new teachers ill-prepared to support students who require specialized support. These deficiencies create a notable gap between the theoretical knowledge teachers acquire and the practical skills they need to manage the complexities of literacy instruction effectively.

The shortcomings in teacher education programs can have a direct impact on classroom instruction. Without robust training in differentiated instruction and intervention strategies, new teachers may rely on a one-size-fits-all approach, which can exacerbate learning gaps among students. This lack of specialized training can also lead to a decrease in teacher confidence and an over-reliance on scripted curricula rather than evidence-based, adaptive teaching (Driver et al., 2024). Addressing these weaknesses is crucial for ensuring that every child receives high-quality literacy instruction tailored to their individual needs.

Contribution to Literacy Instruction Quality

High-quality teacher education enhances several aspects of classroom instruction. It improves teachers' ability to design effective instructional plans that align with learning objectives and curriculum standards. Additionally, it strengthens their assessment literacy, enabling them to use a variety of tools to evaluate student progress and adjust their teaching accordingly (Howorth et al., 2024). When teachers are well-prepared, they can implement a range of classroom practices that are engaging and evidence-based, creating a more effective learning environment for their students.

Table 2. Teacher Contribution to Literacy Instruction Quality

| Teacher Contribution | Impact on Literacy Instruction |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Instructional Planning | Creates structured, effective lessons |
| Assessment Literacy | Informs data-driven teaching decisions |
| Classroom Practices | Fosters engaging and evidence-based learning |

Research consistently shows a strong correlation between effective teacher preparation and higher student literacy achievement. Students taught by well-trained teachers tend to perform better on standardized tests and demonstrate greater literacy proficiency (Kraft & Hernández Rodríguez, 2024; Larsen, 2025). This is because well-prepared teachers are more likely to use instructional strategies that are proven to be effective, such as explicit phonics instruction, vocabulary development, and guided reading. Their ability to deliver high-quality instruction directly translates into improved student outcomes.

The impact of teacher education extends beyond academic performance. A well-prepared teacher can foster a love of reading and writing in their students, which is essential for lifelong learning. By creating a supportive and stimulating classroom environment, they encourage students to engage with literacy beyond the classroom and develop a deep appreciation for the subject (Beal, 2025; Mulcahy et al., 2024). Ultimately, the quality of a teacher's training is reflected not only in test scores but also in students' overall attitudes and engagement with literacy.

Challenges Identified

A significant challenge is the disparity between theoretical knowledge learned in teacher education programs and the practical demands of the classroom. New teachers often report feeling unprepared for the realities of managing diverse student needs, classroom discipline, and the fast pace of daily instruction (McGuire et al., 2024). This theory-practice gap can lead to a period of struggle and burnout, undermining the effectiveness of even the most promising new educators.

Another critical challenge is the limited availability of professional development opportunities for teachers after they graduate. While pre-service training provides a foundation, the field of education is constantly evolving, requiring teachers to continually update their skills and knowledge (Mulcahy et al., 2024). Without access to ongoing training in new literacy research, technologies, and pedagogical techniques, teachers risk becoming stagnant and less effective over time. This lack of continuous learning can particularly hinder a teacher's ability to adapt to the changing needs of their students and the curriculum.

Finally, there are significant variations in the quality of teacher education programs across different regions and institutions. This lack of standardization means that some new teachers are entering the profession with a much stronger foundation than others, creating an unequal playing field (Ansari et al., 2024; Hatlevik, 2024). The quality of a teacher's training should not depend on their geographical location or the institution they attend, as this can perpetuate inequities in educational outcomes for students.

B. Discussion

Interpretation of Findings

The findings underscore the pivotal role of teacher education in shaping the quality of literacy instruction. However, they also reveal that current programs are often not fully aligned with the practical and evolving demands of literacy teaching. The strengths of pre-service training, such as a focus on core pedagogical knowledge, are important, but they are insufficient without stronger links to real-world classroom challenges, particularly differentiated instruction and intervention strategies. This suggests that a fundamental shift is needed from a purely theoretical model to one that is more practical and hands-on.

The research also highlights that effective teaching is a process of lifelong learning. While pre-service training provides a critical starting point, it is not a terminal qualification (Beal, 2025; Driver et al., 2024; Howorth et al., 2024; Mulcahy et al., 2024). The limited professional development opportunities available to teachers post-graduation are a serious

concern, as they hinder a teacher's ability to adapt and grow throughout their career. Therefore, effective literacy instruction requires not only high-quality initial training but also a robust system of continuous learning and support.

The variability in program quality points to a systemic issue within the education sector. When the quality of a teacher's preparation is inconsistent, it creates inequities for students who may be taught by less-prepared educators. Addressing this requires a commitment from both institutions and policymakers to standardize the core components of literacy training, ensuring that all new teachers are equipped with the foundational skills necessary to be effective from day one. This standardization is a crucial step towards ensuring equitable educational outcomes for all students, regardless of where they live.

Implications for Practice

To enhance the quality of literacy instruction, teacher education curricula must be reformed to integrate more evidence-based practices. This includes moving beyond a general overview of literacy methods to a deeper, more hands-on focus on effective strategies like structured literacy and phonological awareness (Ansari et al., 2024; Hatlevik, 2024; Kraft & Hernández Rodríguez, 2024; Larsen, 2025). Programs should provide extensive training in differentiated instruction and practical interventions for struggling readers, ensuring that new teachers are equipped to meet the needs of all students in their classrooms.

Additionally, a greater emphasis on reflective practice and adaptive teaching is necessary. Teacher education programs should encourage aspiring educators to critically evaluate their own teaching methods and to adjust their strategies based on student data and feedback. This fosters a mindset of continuous improvement and equips teachers with the skills to be responsive to the unique learning needs of their students. This approach moves away from a one-size-fits-all model towards a more personalized, student-centered approach to teaching.

Finally, integrating more extensive and supervised practicum experiences is essential. This could involve longer student-teaching placements or mentor programs that pair new teachers with experienced, highly effective literacy educators. Such practical experiences can help bridge the theory-practice gap and provide new teachers with the confidence and skills they need to manage the complexities of a real classroom (Hart et al., 2025; Sáenz et al., 2024). By providing more robust practical training, teacher education can better prepare educators for the demands of the profession.

Implications for Policy

Policymakers must prioritize the standardization of literacy-focused teacher preparation across the nation. This could involve creating national or regional accreditation standards that require all teacher education programs to include specific, evidence-based components of literacy instruction. Such a measure would ensure that every new teacher, regardless of their training institution, has a consistent and high-quality foundation in literacy pedagogy (Kraft & Hernández Rodríguez, 2024; Larsen, 2025). This would help to close the equity gap in education by ensuring all students have access to well-prepared teachers.

Furthermore, it is critical to expand and fund in-service teacher training opportunities. Policymakers should allocate resources for ongoing professional development, particularly in the areas of new literacy research, digital literacy, and intervention strategies. This would empower current teachers to continually improve their skills and adapt their instruction to meet evolving student needs. Providing these opportunities is an investment in the teaching workforce and, ultimately, in student success.

Lastly, policies must ensure equitable access to quality teacher education programs. This could involve scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, or grants for aspiring teachers, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds or those willing to teach in high-needs areas (Elyashiv & Rozenberg, 2024; McGuire et al., 2024). By removing financial and logistical barriers, policymakers can encourage a more diverse and highly qualified group of individuals to enter the teaching profession, ultimately strengthening the entire education system.

CONCLUSION

Teacher education programs play a vital role in enhancing the quality of literacy instruction in primary schools. When these programs have strong pedagogical foundations and include practical components, they directly contribute to improved literacy outcomes for students. The study, however, reveals notable gaps in current teacher preparation, particularly in areas like differentiated instruction and literacy intervention, which highlights the need for significant curriculum reform. To achieve sustainable literacy improvement, it is crucial that policy, educational practices, and ongoing research are integrated to strengthen the entire system of teacher education and professional development.

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