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Exploring the impact of a PD training on history teachers’ reading strategy instruction

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Theoretical background

Comprehending expository texts is an essential skill for students in secondary education, especially for the subject of history. Students are required to infer difficult word meanings, identify main ideas, or explain causal relationships. Therefore, it is essential to know how and when to apply generic and subject-specific reading strategies.\(^1\)

Many history teachers find it difficult to provide adequate reading strategy instruction; only about 10% of instructional time is dedicated to it.\(^2\) Based on the professional development (PD) framework by Desimone,\(^3\) this study explores the effects of a PD training on teachers’ instructional behaviour in the context of reading strategy instruction in history classrooms.\(^4\)

Results

The variety in experimental teachers’ strategy instruction (i.e., their instructional ‘toolbox’) increased after the PD training. Next to orienting and adjustment strategies, teachers now also focused on motivation and reflection.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Think of what you already know about the ancient Greeks!</td>
<td>What information did you find most interesting in this text?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experimental group A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 1</th>
<th>Phase 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy variety range: 0.00–2.80</td>
<td>Strategy variety range: 2.00–9.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contextual hurdles that emerged from the interviews, which possibly limited the effects of the current study:

Conclusions & recommendations

Our results show that teachers in the experimental condition improved the variation of their instruction after a PD training in data use and teaching reading strategies. However, we also identified multiple contextual implementation barriers.

The results from the present study illustrate the value of using micro-level analysis and including teachers’ personal experiences in effectiveness research, which contributes to the development of future, large-scale PD design interventions.

References