BELIEFS, PRACTICES, AND PRESERVICE TEACHERS: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Existing in the chronology of content area literacy instruction is a convincing body of research that supports the role of strategic learning in students’ literacy development. However, much of what is known about teaching reading comprehension strategies is not part of the instruction found in many secondary classrooms. Even though studies have shown how students benefit from using comprehension strategies, the instructional necessities for teaching those strategies are not part of many secondary teachers’ practices. Additionally, the historical focus on literacy practices and strategies is shifting towards attention on the critical role of the disciplines in secondary literacy and the literacies integral to disciplinary practice. What is missing in content area literacy discussions is information about how teacher educators can facilitate preservice teachers’ development of reading and literacy beliefs in order to prepare them to engage their future students in disciplinary literacy. The purpose of this study was to address this gap by exploring the role of the context of a required university content area literacy course on middle level preservice teachers’ developing beliefs about reading and predicated literacy instructional practices.

Using a qualitative case study framework and constant comparative analysis, I examined how four focal participants developed beliefs and understandings about the roles of reading and literacy strategies instruction across and within content areas and disciplines. The context for the study was a university required content area literacy in a middle level teacher education program. Based on my analyses of the written documents, interviews, and reflective conversations of the members of the case group, I found that these preservice teachers reconciled their predetermined...
beliefs about reading and learning with their new learning about literacy strategies instruction to create images of themselves as future content area literacy teachers of middle level students. The study also offers implications to teacher educators of ways to create a context within the university content area literacy course that offers opportunities for preservice teachers to develop beliefs in line with current research about the teaching and learning processes of disciplinary literacy strategies instruction.