Abstract

What is the quantity and quality of teachers’ read aloud practices in Norwegian 1st grade classrooms?

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Read alouds are an important activity for authentically supporting children’s literacy development (Serafini & Moses, 2014) and therefore should be a daily routine in first grade classrooms. Additionally, within that practice it is essential for teachers to utilize the instructional opportunities offered (Anderson et. al, 1985). However, convergent research emphasizes that authentic literature in beginning literacy instruction is often underutilized (e.g. McCaffrey & Hisrich, 2017; Lehman et.al, 1994). In this study, we aim to add to the field by asking: What is the quantity and quality of teachers’ read aloud practices occurring in Norwegian 1st grade classrooms?

Our work is based on an empirical framework documenting the benefits of read alouds (e.g. Stevens et. al. 2010; Wells, 1986), and recommendations for how reading literature aloud can contribute to children’s literacy development (e.g. Bingham et al, 2017; Serafini & Moses, 2014). The source of data is an online questionnaire, including both closed and open questions, regarding read aloud practices (e.g. frequency, situation, choice of literature, purpose, practice) answered by first grade teachers (n=299).

Findings reveal that most teachers use read aloud daily, which is aligned with research recommendations. Nevertheless, from a literacy development perspective, findings also reveal that teachers may not be using the full potential of reading aloud. For example, reading aloud is often distanced from school subjects, such as during lunch breaks. Accordingly, the entertaining nature of the texts is rated of high importance. Furthermore, despite conversations during read alouds, the use of planned stops was uncommon. This indicates that read-alouds are likely considered an informal teacher practice – one that may not be prepared for in a systematic manner.
The study is relevant to literacy instruction in first grade, highlighting opportunities of unused potential via read alouds. As a follow up, classroom based research of improving literacy instruction during read alouds could strengthen both research and teaching practice.

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