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The use of keywords for delivering immediate performance feedback on teacher competence development

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Literature shows that feedback that is specific, immediate and goal-oriented is effective on (pre-service) teachers' performance. Synchronous coaching gives this kind of feedback. Due to immediateness of feedback, pre-service teachers can suffer from cognitive load. We propose a set of standardised keywords through which this performance feedback can be delivered – each keyword acts as a summary for the feedback message. The construction and the selection of the keywords is aimed at the reduction of message ambiguity, while at the same time a low level of cognitive load on the pre-service teacher must be maintained. An *in vivo* pilot-study with 40 respondents (pre-service teachers and their coaches) supported our hypothesis that usage of such sets of standardised keywords will mitigate the levels of ambiguity and cognitive load. These findings and other considerations for additional research using immediate performance are addressed.

Keywords: performance feedback; BIE device; pre-service teachers; cognitive load; ambiguity

Introduction

Many countries today are facing the issue of teacher shortages due to the demographic aging and drop-out of teachers early in their career (e.g. in the Netherlands: Commissie Leraren 2007). Teacher preparation and induction has, therefore, gained increased attention as a means of assisting teachers' successful entry into the teaching profession (Giebelhaus and Bowman 2002) and to reduce dropout. Studies have shown that successful entry into the profession reduces feelings of anxiety, isolation and powerlessness (Brown 2005). However, pre-service teachers reported a lack of effective support during their teacher preparation (Rushton 2003). Consequently, effective teacher preparation of pre-service teachers has become a growing concern for teacher educators, preferably in the workplace, due to the increased emphasis placed on this. Rose and Church (1998) recommended practice with performance feedback as a necessary component of any training programme that is implemented to change teacher behaviour in the classroom. There is emerging evidence supporting the effectiveness of performance feedback (Coddling et al. 2005; Noell et al. 2002). Therefore, an important teacher-preparation technique is performance feedback.

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