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Much attention has been given to the impact of cooperative teachers on the pedagogical behaviour of student teachers. In many cases, however, cooperating teachers gain as much from the student teacher as the student teacher acquires from them. This study was designed to elicit answers to the following two questions: (1) What are the perspectives of early childhood cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction in the Jordanian context? and (2) Does the perspectives of early childhood cooperating teachers engaging in early reading instruction change as a result of working with student teachers? The study targeted a sample of 25 cooperating teachers and 28 student teachers who participated in the study by completing a questionnaire, and follow-up interviews were also conducted with 13 cooperating teachers. Results of this study indicate that cooperating teachers endorse the phonics method more than the whole language (WL) approach. Unlike past research, the results of this study revealed that (1) the student teaching experience had no effect on the perspective of cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction and (b) the perspectives of cooperating teachers do not become similar to those of their student teachers who were WL-oriented. The results have implications for early childhood teacher education programmes and professional development for kindergarten teachers.

Keywords: cooperating teacher; fieldwork experience; kindergartens; phonics method; reading instruction; whole language

Introduction

Although early reading educators have not reached complete agreement about how children should be taught to read – and which approach provides sufficiently accurate teaching skills for children – they have agreed that there is no single, quick, and best method for developing the skills of beginning readers (Allington & Cunningham, 2007). In Jordan, where this study was conducted, Jordanian kindergarten teachers use different approaches in teaching young children to read. Each approach depends on the level of competence, experience, and preference of the teacher. In visiting kindergartens in Jordan, it can be observed that traditional phonics (PH) methods are widely used, and even though many Jordanian teachers have not heard about the whole language (WL) method of instruction, a number of teachers can be observed using this method as well.

Because of the lack of training programmes in Jordanian kindergartens, kindergarten teachers, who teach for a long time, are largely unfamiliar with the WL method of instruction, which is newer in the Jordanian educational context. In most newly established teacher education programmes at Jordanian universities, student teachers who specialise in early childhood education (ECE) are exposed to a variety of approaches to

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early literacy instruction, including the WL approach. When student teachers enter the classroom during their practicum placements, they bring new and different approaches to the instruction of literacy. Thus, kindergarten teachers in the field who serve as mentors or cooperating teachers may benefit professionally from their student teachers, if the student teachers employ different approaches in their teaching practice (Overton, 2008).

Research studies in teacher education indicate that teacher's qualification, the number of years of teaching experience, training programmes, workshops, and conferences are all ways to influence the pedagogical behaviour and practice of teachers (Collinson, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2010). Moreover, mentoring student teachers can also affect a teacher's practice (Ganser, 1996; Landt, 2002, 2004; Mecca, 2010; Overton, 2008). The purpose of the current study is twofold: first, to examine the perceptions of early childhood cooperating teachers towards early reading instruction, and second, to explore the perceptions of and influence on cooperating teachers in working with student teachers.

Background of the study

The education system in Jordan consists of a 2-year cycle of kindergarten education, 10 years of compulsory basic education, and 2 years of secondary education (Ministry of Education [MOE], 2004). In compliance with the MOE rules and regulations, children at the age of at least 3 years and 8 months are allowed to enter kindergarten. Unlike the other two educational stages, which are compulsory, preschool education in Jordan is still non-compulsory and is mainly run by the private sector, charities, and voluntary societies (United Nations Educational, Scientific, Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). MOE runs a very limited number of public kindergarten classes in some remote regions.

Private Jordanian kindergartens are not required to follow the same prescribed curriculum designed by the MOE. Private kindergartens often use curricula of their choice after gaining permission and approval from the MOE. These curricula are picked off-the-shelf from local and regional textbook producers, even if many of these do not employ teams of early childhood experts, resulting in curricula that are not age appropriate. In 2004, the MOE developed its national curriculum to be utilised only in public kindergartens. The textbooks used in private kindergartens support a PH approach, while the MOE curriculum utilises a balanced approach to reading instruction.

At the Hashemite University, where the present study was implemented, the minimum duration of study for the bachelor's degree in ECE is no less than 3 academic years. After students have successfully completed 114 of the132 credit hours of required study, they are ready to start their fieldwork course in kindergartens. This field course carries only 6 credit hours (out of 132) of the student's study plan. The practice duration is 3 days a week for one scholastic semester (roughly for 16 weeks). The practice period in kindergartens is divided into three stages: (1) the observation stage (e.g., observation of the daily school, classroom routine work, and teaching strategies), (2) the interim (partial practice) stage (e.g., teaching of limited portion of cooperating teachers' lesson plan), and (3) the full practice stage (e.g., taking full responsibility practice in the cooperating teachers' class (The Hashemite University, 2002)). To complete their field hours, the early childhood pre-service teachers are placed in kindergartens in the surrounding areas. The fieldwork course offers practical application of teaching theories the students learned via their ECE courses as well as through participation in teaching situations with young children. The emphasis of their field experience is on the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their teaching and classroom experiences. University supervisors are responsible for each student's performance and evaluation in their fieldwork experiences.

Student teachers stay with the same cooperating teachers and class for one semester, which is their first experience of fieldwork. Kindergarten teachers who serve as cooperating teachers are required to have a diploma or a bachelor's degree in ECE and are often qualified to teach just at kindergartens' stage (children aged 3–6 years).

In Jordanian teacher education programmes, there is no fixed process for selecting cooperating teachers. Although these programmes identify cooperating teachers and their roles and duties, the selection process of cooperating teachers and their assignment has no specific standards. Each university has a list of kindergartens, and student teachers are required to select their preferred kindergarten. According to the Hashemite University's regulations, cooperating teachers are not paid for having students in their classroom as their participation is voluntarily. Blocker and Swetnam (1995) pointed out that cooperating teachers should be carefully selected because their role in the preparation of future teachers is critical. Unfortunately, the majority of Jordanian universities do not require cooperating teachers take any classes or in-service training workshops in supervision. However, Jordanian universities do provide cooperating teachers with a fieldwork manual.

Before the fieldwork is undertaken, the practicum coordinator or the director sends an official letter to the selected kindergartens, requesting students be placed in their kindergarten classrooms. In this letter, no criteria are provided in the selection of cooperating teachers, and generally, the kindergarten principals simply assign each student teacher a classroom and cooperating teacher. It should be mentioned kindergartens where student teachers go to do fieldwork are different in their nature; some student teachers have a lot of freedom within the constraints of existing resources and established routines, while others may not have such freedom.

Early reading instruction

Learning to read is one of the most critical learning skills a child must acquire at school. There is much evidence that children can benefit from early reading instruction in the early years of education (Musen, 2010). Because of the importance of reading for academic success, there has been much debate about how reading should be taught to children (National Reading Panel, 2000). Researchers have suggested that early reading teachers should be educated using methods that capture the interests of children and enrich their experiences (Coople & Bredekamp, 2009; Enz & Morrow, 2009; Morrow, 2011).

Two general instructional approaches have dominated the field of reading instruction: the PH method and the WL method. The professional debate on PH versus WL has long been a hotly debated topic among early literacy educators (Brooks & Brooks, 2005; Faust & Kandelshine-Waldman, 2011; Goodman, 1992; Routman, 1996; Stahl, Mckenna, & Pagnucco, 1994; Strickland, 1998) and continues to the present day. Both approaches reflect different underlying philosophies and stress varied skills (Wren, 2003). In this current study, the perspectives of early childhood cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction were investigated to see which approach they employ and whether and to what extent student teachers may influence the opinions and teaching practices of the cooperating teachers who invite them to practise in their classrooms.

Advocates of the WL method deem reading a holistic, top-down process. This approach focuses on the entire text, emphasising the whole word concept (Liu, 2013). "Whole" in this method means "completeness," highlighting the importance of unity (Wang, 2009). It encourages the immersion of children in language and literature and helps them construct the meaning of the written language while learning. In WL

classrooms, the four language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – are viewed as interrelated elements of the same underlying linguistic competence (Debaryshe, Binder, & Buell, 2000; Liu, 2013). In the views of Pressley (2006), the elements of a WL approach encourage a literacy development component with a focus on vocabulary development, writing competence, and a positive attitude towards reading and writing.

In contrast, advocates of the PH method of instruction consider reading a largely bottom-up process. This approach emphasises reading through the sounds of the letters in the alphabet and involves direct instruction as beginning readers practise using materials crafted to emphasise specific PH concepts (Stahl, 1998). This approach is associated with sound–symbol correspondence and word structure. In this approach, reading materials emphasise the sounds of the letters through rhyme, songs, body movement, games, flash cards, and cassette tapes (Coople & Bredekamp, 2009; Morrow, 2011). PH-oriented teachers provide children with the "understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes and graphemes, the letters that represent those sounds in written language" (Armbruster, Lehr, & Osborn, 2001, p. 3). Instructional methods in this approach stress practising such skills in isolation until adequate mastery is obtained before children attempt to derive meaning from the whole text (Debaryshe et al., 2000). Advocates of this approach find it successful as phonemes are introduced to children in a way which begins with the easiest sounds and progresses to the most complex sounds (The Department for Education, 2013). However, educators consider this approach to be very difficult for children who have had very little experience with spoken language in their earliest years (Featherstone, 2013).

Educators remain divided regarding the effectiveness of both approaches to reading instruction. Researchers (see Adams, 1990; Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) have conducted studies that show the effectiveness of each approach on the development of children's reading skills. They found that explicit instruction in PH leads to higher reading achievement scores on standardised tests during the primary grades, while research on children who were taught in WL classrooms has found greater growth in different aspects of language and literacy (see Ribowsky, 1985; Stice & Bertrand, 1990).

Because each approach has its strengths and weaknesses, educators have moved to a balanced approach in reading instruction, combining both the PH and the WL approach (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Dahl & Scharer, 2000; Pressley, 2006). Christie, Enz, and Vukelich (2011) propose a balanced approach as the best way to prepare children to become successful readers. They argue that while decoding is an essential part of the reading process, comprehension leads the reader to predict upcoming words as these skills, decoding and comprehension, are integrally connected (Christie et al., 2011). In the views of Pressley (2006), balanced approaches in reading instruction include explicit and systematic teaching of the skills required to read and in a literacy-rich environment that includes children's literature. A balanced approach consists of five foundation elements: phonemic awareness, PH, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (Pressley, 2006). In kindergarten classrooms, a balanced approach involves a combination of language development, phonemic awareness, and PH-building and needs to be taught through explicit instruction by clearly explaining and guiding children to develop these skills (Buckingham, Wheldall, & Beaman-Wheldall, 2013).

In support of the research findings, and taking into consideration critical cultural views of literacy, educators have adopted a number of models of literacy instruction (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Durrant & Green, 2000; Freebody & Luke, 1999, 2003). For example, the four resources model advocated by Freebody and Luke (1999, 2003) is the most famous model of literacy instruction, which can be used to improve a variety of

knowledge and skills that all literacy learners need in order to become effective readers (Simandan, 2012). This model provides a framework of teaching literacy, including four basic roles for readers in today's society: (1) code breaker, (2) text user, (3) text participant, and (4) text analysis. The model draws attention to the kinds of practices children need to learn (Comber, 1997). This model helps teachers analyse, weigh, and balance students' diverse practices and capacities, a range of curriculum and pedagogic possibilities (Freebody & Luke, 2003, p. 56).

The influence of student teachers on cooperating teachers

The influence of cooperating teachers on the attitudes, perceptions, and instructional behaviour of student teachers is well founded (Anderson, 2007; Dunning, Meegan, Woods, & Belton, 2011; Hamman, Olivárez, et al., 2006; Larson, 2005). In contrast, much less attention has been given to the impact of student teachers on the pedagogical behaviour and practice of cooperating teachers.

During their teaching experiences in the field, student teachers are expected to benefit from the teaching practices of the cooperating teachers with whom they are placed. Cooperating teachers are considered the most important figure in the professional development and preparation of student teachers (Hamman, Olivárez, et al., 2006).

Ganser (1996) pointed out that cooperating teachers can help student teachers make the transition from "students of teaching" to "teachers of students." However, cooperating teachers are not excluded from the benefits of the fieldwork experiences of their student teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Ganser, 1996; Landt, 2002, 2004; Mecca, 2010; Overton, 2008). As pointed out by Kiraz (2004), there can be "reserve knowledge transform" between student teachers and their cooperating teachers. Similarly, Landt (2002) suggested that "the daily attendance of another adult in the classroom, interested in every aspect of the cooperating teacher's day, interrupts the daily routine and can create the space for learning" (p. 599). In the view of Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995), teachers learn by collaborating with other teachers and by sharing their experiences.

Every semester, universities and colleges send out student teachers to the field with the purpose of increasing their teaching skills and improving the teaching and learning process. Although many experienced teachers host a fieldwork student who benefits from their expertise, the exchange, as Landt (2002) argued, is not always one way. That is, cooperating teachers often gain as much from the student teacher as the student teacher acquires from them. Research studies reveal that when student teachers in the field successfully practise what they have learned at their university, they are more likely to transfer perspectives, skills, and teaching activities to cooperating teachers (Kiraz, 2004).

In an exploratory study, Overton (2008) examined the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding their professional impact on working with student teachers. The results of her study suggested that cooperating teachers considered the mentoring of student teachers as a source of professional development and saw working with student teachers as a rewarding experience. Similarly, in their study on cooperating teachers, Ganser and Koskeka (1997) indicated that cooperating teachers considered working with education majors in the field exposed them to current ideas about teaching and contributed to the updating of their own teaching practices. Of course, not all cooperating teachers experience professional growth during fieldwork experience nor are they all influenced by the practices of their student teachers (Landt, 2002; Murray & Stotko, 2004).

In the United States, Hamman, Kathryn, et al. (2006) carried out a study that identified how cooperating teachers influence the behaviour and the quality of reading instruction of student teachers. The results indicated that the instructional behaviour of cooperating teachers and their student teachers was similar. Moreover, the instructional behaviour of cooperating teachers was predictive of the instructional behaviour of their student teachers, although the quality of instruction of student teachers was unrelated to the instructional behaviour of their cooperating teachers. The authors of that study recommended further research on the effect cooperating teachers might have on the literacy practices of new teachers once they leave the practicum setting (Hamman, Kathryn, et al., 2006). There is a scarcity of research regarding the influence of student teachers on their cooperating teachers in the field of early reading instruction. Therefore, a major aim of this study was to help fill this gap and in doing so aid the Early Childhood Teacher Education (ECTE) programme regarding early literacy instruction.

Statement of the problem

In Jordan, kindergartens employ different curricula regarding early Arabic reading instruction. Private Jordanian kindergartens are not required to follow the same prescribed curriculum designed by the MOE. In the absence of a WL approach in these curricula, the PH approach still dominates in most reading curricula. Some kindergarten teachers still teach reading in much the same way as if the children were in the primary stages. In their teacher education programme, student teachers are exposed to different reading approaches, including PH, WL, and balanced approaches, placing more emphasis on the WL approach as this approach is newer in the Jordanian educational context.

Yearly, kindergartens open their doors to many student teachers who practise what they have studied at the university. They all come from different universities with the latest and contemporary issues in ECE and have the potential to bring new knowledge to their cooperating teachers (Overton, 2008). Cooperating teachers are expected to observe the practices of their student teachers, and to discuss with them certain issues related to their practice. Many educators believe that cooperating teachers may benefit from the way student teachers teach (Ganser, 1996; Landt, 2002, 2004; Mecca, 2010; Overton, 2008). Therefore, this line of research is an important aspect for teachers' professional development since the field practice should be a chance for the development of both the cooperating teachers and student teachers.

Research questions

Given the lack of research in this area, the aim of this study was to investigate the perspectives of cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction and the influence that student teachers may have on their perspectives. More specifically, the study was designed to elicit answers to the following questions:

  (1) What are the perspectives of early childhood cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction?
  (2) Do the perspectives of early childhood cooperating teachers engaging in early reading instruction change as a result of working with student teachers?

Method

Participants

Initially, 28 pairs of ECE cooperating teachers and student teachers volunteered to participate in this study. The cooperating teachers were from private kindergartens and ranged in age from 24 to 39 years. In terms of teaching, their years of experience ranged from 3 to 17 years. All of the cooperating teachers and the student teachers were female.

The field training experience took place during the 2010–2011 academic year, in 12 cooperating kindergartens in Zarqa, the second largest city in Jordan after Amman, the capital. At the final stage of this investigation, three cooperating teachers (out of 28 total) had dropped out of the study; thus, the final number of participant pairs (cooperating teachers and their student teachers) totalled 25. Furthermore, follow-up interviews were conducted. Thirteen cooperating teachers who responded to the questionnaire were randomly selected to be interviewed to obtain a more in-depth understanding of their perspectives.

Research instruments

For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire was specifically designed to examine the perceptions of cooperating teachers and the impact student teachers might have on their perspective regarding early reading instruction. The research instrument was developed after a thorough review of the literature in the field of early Arabic literacy development, particularly research related to early reading instruction. All items in the questionnaire were answered on a 5-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating "strongly agree" and 1 indicating "strongly disagree" (see Table 1). The 27-item questionnaire consists of two subscales with 14 items assessing endorsement of the WL method of instruction and 13 items assessing endorsement of PH method of instruction.

The face and content validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by a seven-expert panel consisting of university teacher educators with specialisation in ECE. Changes indicated by the validation panel were incorporated into the final questionnaire.

To assess reliability of the questionnaire, it was administered to an outside sample of 12 kindergarten teachers. Two weeks later, the same test was administered to the same sample. The correlation between the first and the second administrations amounted to .87, which was considered satisfactory for the purpose of this study.

Table 1.   Sample items from the questionnaire.

Sample items
Whole language items (14 items)
4 – I believe that all language arts are related and taught together
6 – I fill up my classroom with a print-rich environment including books, magazines, newspapers, directories, posters, signs, packages, etc.
22 – I use shared reading from literature in my classroom
Phonics items (13 items)
1 – I teach phonics as a separate lesson
9 – I employ in my classroom sounding out letters and groups of letters
11 – I use rules about how letter combinations sound

Notes: Response scale: strongly disagree = 1, disagree = 2, undecided = 3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5.

Follow-up interviews

A semi-structured interview was also included in this study to clarify issues identified in the questionnaire as well as to gain a deeper understanding of the response of the participant. The interview was held with the randomly selected 13 cooperating teachers who answered the questionnaire. The interview questions were prepared after analysing the questionnaire. Through interviews, the cooperating teachers were asked questions regarding their relationship with their student teachers, student teachers' approach to teaching reading, and to what extent student teachers influenced their practice or perceptions.

Data gathering

A meeting was held with all cooperating teachers and their student teachers in their kindergarten settings. At these meetings, they were asked to take part in the study and were provided an explanation of the study and an assurance of confidentiality and anonymity. The cooperating and student teachers were asked to complete the survey questionnaire and were encouraged to read the statements carefully before selecting the appropriate choice. This meeting and completion of the questionnaires took place at the beginning of the first academic year (September, 2010). Later, at the beginning of the second academic year (February, 2011), only the cooperating teachers who were still participating in the study completed the same questionnaire for the second time. Three cooperating teachers did not complete the same questionnaire for the second time (due to moving out of the area and resigning from their teaching position). Therefore, the absentees ($n = 3$) were excluded from the total sample of cooperating teachers.

With regard to the interviews, data from the follow-up interviews were collected at the middle of the second academic year (from April to May, 2011). The interviews were conducted in the teachers' break room and took about 15–20 min.

Data analysis

Data obtained from the questionnaires were quantitatively analysed using SPSS software package version 15.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations were utilised to describe the mean data overall and for each scale. A paired-samples *t*-test was used to find statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-fieldwork experience. A correlational analysis was also utilised to find similarity between cooperating teachers and their student teachers' perceptions of early reading instruction.

Data obtained from interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. After the interviews were transcribed, a list of all topic areas were compiled by reading through the interview data, line by line, and categorising the information in relation to the aims of the study. The two instruments used in this study (the questionnaire and the follow-up interview) supplemented and complemented each other and provided composite data for the study under investigation.

Results

This study examined changes in the perspective of cooperating teachers related to early reading instruction and the impact of their student teachers on those changes. The results

of the study are presented under the following four sections: (1) Cooperating teachers' perspective regarding early reading instruction, (2) Changes in cooperating teachers' perspectives, (3) Student teachers' perspective regarding early reading instruction, and (4) Correlations between cooperating teachers' and student teachers' perspective regarding early reading instruction.

Cooperating teachers' perspective regarding early reading instruction

In order to examine the perspective of cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction, means and standard deviations for the pre- and post-fieldwork experience scores were utilised. Table 2 illustrates the perspectives of cooperating teachers regarding both the WL and the PH approaches.

As shown in Table 2, the mean score of the pre-fieldwork experience on the WL scale was 2.05 with a standard deviation of .22, whereas the mean score of the post-fieldwork experience was 2.10 with a standard deviation of .19 on the same scale. Regarding the PH scale, the data presented in Table 2 reveal that the mean score of the pre-fieldwork experience was 3.86 with a standard deviation of .23, whereas the mean score of the post-fieldwork experience was 3.81 with a standard deviation of .31. The mean score of both the pre- and post-fieldwork experience concerning the PH scale was higher than the mean score of the WL scale, indicating that cooperating teachers showed a preference for the PH approach more than for the WL approach.

Results obtained from the interviews confirmed the results of the questionnaire since the majority of the cooperating teachers interviewed (10 out of 13) mentioned that they employ a bottom-up process, which reflects a PH approach in their classrooms. One cooperating teacher defended her view by saying:

> Children benefit more from phonics method. Well … I have heard from my educational supervisor about the whole language method. To be honest, I did not try it so far.

Another cooperating teachers added:

> I do not have more information about how to implement the whole language approach in my classroom. I think it is difficult for young children to start reading the whole word before they know the alphabet, so I follow the phonics approach.

From the interview results, it is of interest to note that although four teachers follow a PH approach, they do not know the name of this approach. As one of them stated:

Table 2.   Pre- and post-fieldwork experience mean scores and standard deviation for the cooperating teachers' scales.

	Pre-fieldwork		Post-fieldwork	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD
Whole language	2.05	.22	2.10	.19
Phonics	3.86	.23	3.81	.31
Total	2.95	.13	2.95	.18

Notes: M: mean, SD: standard deviation, $N = 25$.

> I first teach my children how to pronounce the sounds of letters. I do not know what that is called. I do not actually follow any other method in teaching reading.

Changes in cooperating teachers' perspectives regarding early reading instruction

Paired *t*-tests of the within-group differences in the pre- and post-placement WL scale, PH scale, and the total scores were used to examine the changes in the perspective of cooperating teachers over the time of the fieldwork experience. The result presented in Table 3 reveals that there are no statistically significant differences ($\alpha = .05$) between pre- and post-placement on the total scale scores ($p = .976$), the WL scale scores ($p = .197$), and the PH scale scores ($p = .568$). This result shows that the perspectives of cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction were stable over the course of the fieldwork experience and did not change after the field training experience.

Student teachers' perspectives regarding early reading instruction

The aim of investigating the perspective of student teachers regarding early reading instruction is to discover whether student teachers have an effect on the opinions of cooperating teachers in the field. Twenty-eight student teachers completed a 27-item questionnaire, identical to the questionnaire completed by their cooperating teachers. As shown in Table 4, student teachers endorsed the WL method of instruction more than the PH method, mean score for the WL scale (4.04) in comparison to the mean score for the PH scale (2.52).

Table 3. Paired *t*-test results of the pre- and post-fieldwork experience.

Scale	Variables	No.	Mean	SD	*t*	*p*
Whole language	Pre-training period	25	2.05	.22	−1.326	.197
	Post-training period	25	2.10	.19		
Phonics	Pre-training period	25	3.86	.23	.580	.568
	Post-training period	25	3.81	.31		
Total	Pre-training period	25	2.95	.13	−.031	.976
	Post-training period	25	2.95	.18		

Table 4. The mean scores and standard deviation for the student teachers' scales.

Scale	Mean	Standard deviation
Whole language	4.04	.23
Phonics	2.52	.33
Total	3.28	.17

Note: $N = 28$.

Table 5. Correlational analysis among scales of the cooperating teachers' pre- and post-fieldwork experience and their student teachers' scale.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. WL-Pre	1.00								
2. PH-Pre	−.32	1.00							
3. Total-Pre	.55**	.60**	1.00						
4. WL-Post	.66**	−.08	.48*	1.00					
5. PH-post	−.25	.09	−.13	.04	1.00				
6. Total-post	.12	.03	.13	.55*	.85**	1.00			
7. WL-ST	.11	−.19	−.07	.27	−.29	−.09	1.00		
8. PH-ST	.25	−.07	.15	.43*	−.00	.22	−.32	1.00	
9. Total-ST	.29	−.18	.08	.55*	−.19	.12	.37*	.75**	1.00

Notes: $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$. WL = whole language, PH = phonics, ST = student teacher.

Correlations between cooperating teachers' and student teachers' perspectives regarding early reading instruction

The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to assess the relationship between the views of cooperating teachers and their student teachers regarding early reading instruction. The correlation analysis was run among the total scale scores of the pre- and post-fieldwork experience scale, the WL scale, and the PH scale, as well as the student teacher total, the WL scores, and PH scale scores. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 5.

Total scale score

Results indicated that the total scale scores for cooperating teachers in their pre- and post-fieldwork experience were insignificantly correlated with the total score of their student teachers. The correlation between the scale scores of cooperating teachers in their pre-fieldwork experience and the total scale scores of their student teachers was insignificant ($r = .08$), and it was also insignificant ($r = .12$) with regard to their post-fieldwork experience. This result means that the cooperating teachers' perspectives regarding teaching reading did not change after having student teachers in their classes.

Whole language scale scores

The analysis of the WL scale scores reveals that there was no significant correlation between the WL scale scores of cooperating teachers regarding their pre- and post-fieldwork experience and the WL scale score of their student teachers. The pre-fieldwork experience correlation was insignificant ($r = .11$), and the post-fieldwork experience correlation was also insignificant ($r = .27$).

This result means that student teachers did not change their cooperating teachers' perspectives regarding the teaching of reading.

Phonics method scale scores

Results show that neither the pre-fieldwork nor the post-fieldwork PH scale scores of cooperating teachers was significantly correlated with the PH scores of student teachers. The correlation was insignificant ($r = −.07$), regarding the pre-fieldwork experience, and it

was also insignificant ($r = -.00$) regarding the post-fieldwork experience. Similar to the aforementioned result, this finding means that student teachers did not have an influence on their cooperating teachers' perspectives of teaching reading.

Six cooperating teachers interviewed (out of 13) indicated that they discussed issues related to teaching reading with their student teachers. They mentioned that they let student teachers observe their approach of teaching reading, and after that, they allow them to follow the method they prefer in teaching reading. One of them said:

> At the beginning of the year, I sit with my student teacher and show her my approach of teaching. Later I ask her to observe me while I teach.

Against this background, seven participants (out of 13) revealed that they rarely discuss with their student teachers how to teach reading. One cooperating teacher summed up this view by saying:

> I suppose that student teachers had studied literacy theories at the university. Here it is a time for practice. I usually do not talk to them about methods or approaches; instead, I show them how I teach and they are required to practice what they have already observed.

Regarding student teachers' approach to teaching reading, nine cooperating teachers (out of 13) mentioned that they allow student teachers to teach reading using their own teaching methods without forcing them to follow the cooperating teachers' approach. One cooperating teacher was very keen to talk about this topic:

> Student teachers often use my way of teaching without change. Sometimes, few student teachers employ different methods of teaching reading like "the whole method" but I feel it takes long time, but I let them do it without interfering in their lessons.

In contrast, five cooperating teachers (out of 13) indicated that their student teachers are not allowed to use any method in teaching reading except for a PH approach. They mentioned that their children became familiar with PH method, and when student teachers employ a different method of teaching reading, children may get confused. One cooperating teacher explained:

> We have to follow our reading textbook which presents letters based on the phonics approach. It is not allowed for student teachers and even me to change it to different approach of teaching because children got familiar with this method.

Results revealed that three teachers said that they were not present when their student teachers instruct the children, and therefore, they do not know what approach their student teachers employ. One cooperating teacher made the following statement:

> The university assigns one student teacher in my class each semester. To tell the truth, I have many duties in the kindergarten and my principal allows me to do these duties while my student teacher in my classroom. For that reason, I do not have the opportunity to observe or know her teaching methods of reading.

Cooperating teachers were asked to what extent their student teachers influenced their teaching practice or perceptions. Eight of cooperating teachers (out of 13) indicated that student teachers should be influenced by their teaching methods as they lack teaching

experience, but not the opposite. They argue that they have rich experience and they want to transfer it to the student teachers. One of them said:

> We are open to any experience to develop our teaching methods. However, student teachers need experience and their attempts at teaching are still poor. They should benefit from our experience, and we are here to help them.

Another one was surprised from the question as she stated:

> Do you think the university sends out student teachers to kindergartens to teach us a new experience! I do not think so! What they have is theories … Yes, theories and as you know there is a big difference between theory and practice.

Against this background, three cooperating teachers showed interest in reading approaches used by their student teachers and expressed a real desire to learn from them. However, two of them mentioned that although they advocate WL approach of teaching early reading, they cannot change their approach (PH approach), because PH is the only approach adopted by the kindergarten and thus they have to follow what is required. The first one stated:

> I liked the way student teachers use whole language approach. It is really an interesting experience for me. I really like it. I would love to know more about it.

The second one added:

> Whole language is a good approach for reading instruction. My student teachers use it in my classroom when the university supervisor visits them particularly. I want to say something … .
> I employed it in my previous kindergarten where I used to work. However, this kindergarten employs a phonics approach in teaching reading so I have to follow it.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this study was to identify the perspectives of cooperating teachers regarding early reading instruction and to discover the impact of student teachers on the opinions of cooperating teachers after the fieldwork was undertaken. The results presented here reveal that cooperating teachers support the PH method of instruction more than the WL approach, that is to say, the PH method of early reading instruction is advocated by early childhood cooperating teachers. The reason for this preference, in part, is probably due to their prior training/education in the PH approach and also due to having used it for a long time. Thus, they have become very familiar with this method more than any other method of early reading instruction. Cohen and Hill (2001) found that teachers often embrace teaching methods that were supported by training courses or workshops they have taken.

Furthermore, at the kindergarten level, reading and writing textbooks, which the cooperating teachers employ in their classrooms, support the PH method of instruction (even though some of these textbooks were not designed by the MOE.) One can say that the WL approach is still a relatively unfamiliar approach among Jordanian cooperating teachers, especially among those who have been teaching in kindergartens for a long time.

Although the PH method has its own advocates as a successful approach to teaching beginning readers (Anderson et al., 1985), the avoidance of different approaches, such as

the WL approach, may not be an appropriate practice in teaching early reading (Coople & Bredekamp, 2009). Researchers suggested that a combined approach of reading instruction is beneficial for children (Buckingham et al., 2013; Dahl & Scharer, 2000; Pressley, 2006).

This result of this study raises questions about the knowledge and understanding cooperating teachers have about the WL method of instruction especially in situations where student teachers are requested to employ this method in their classroom field experience. Indeed, what matters most is what student teachers learn during their field experience. It is, therefore, important for cooperating teachers to have knowledge of, and to learn about, different approaches to early literacy instruction. In her study, Mecca (2010) found that a lack of training can frustrate cooperating teachers, and this can affect their ability to appropriately supervise student teachers.

Against this background, the results of this study reveal that student teachers embrace the WL method of instruction. This is perhaps because student teachers, in their teacher education programmes, have studied different instructional approaches to early literacy development, including the WL approach. However, this finding is not consistent with Sukyadi's research (1998) that found that student teachers and experienced teachers supported neither the PH nor the WL approaches exclusively, but rather preferred a combination of the two. In addition, the study of Hamman, Kathryn, et al. (2006) did not show significant differences between cooperating teachers and student teachers in the frequency of early reading instruction.

The results of this study reveal that the opinions held by cooperating teachers do not change after the fieldwork was undertaken. In other words, the perspective of cooperating teachers did not become similar to their student teachers over the course of fieldwork training. This result means that the student teaching had no impact on the perspective of their cooperating teachers concerning early reading development. This result is not consistent with the majority of research studies reviewed that suggest that cooperating teachers learn from the experience of their student teachers and that working with student teachers provides an opportunity for the professional development of cooperating teachers (Ganser, 1996; Ganser & Koskeka, 1997; Kiraz, 2004; Landt, 2002, 2004; Mecca, 2010; Overton, 2008).

The findings of this study may be attributed to the nature of practicum programmes within most Jordanian universities and simply indicate differences in field placement and field experience based on the educational programmes and the location of those programmes. For example, the duration of the fieldwork in this study, as required by the ECTE programme at the Hashemite University, lasts only 16 weeks, and the fieldwork is the first experience for student teachers. In contrast, student teachers in other contexts may have a number of fieldwork experiences across their studies, including a final internship in their last semester and therefore may spend more time with their cooperating teachers. In the context of this study, the somewhat limited time (in relation to other university field placement requirements) that student teachers have in their settings may not afford them as many opportunities to establish new teaching strategies and discuss teaching-related issues related to practice with their cooperating teachers. Another reason could be due to the fact that some of cooperating teachers do not invest much effort in training student teachers in teaching practices. Instead, in some cases, as noted by a few cooperating teachers who participated in this study, student teachers are left alone in the classroom. Thus, their teaching practice is not observed nor are they provided supportive feedback. This type of training certainly limits professional development opportunities for both the student teacher and the cooperating teacher and demonstrates as posited by Zeichner

(2002) that supervising student teachers in schools is not often valued by cooperating teachers.

During informal observations of a number of cooperating kindergartens involved in the ECTE programme at the Hashemite University, where this study was conducted, it was apparent that cooperating teachers often do not even give themselves an opportunity to observe different approaches to the teaching that takes place in their own classrooms. This is simply because they do not spend much time with their student teachers in the classroom. In the views of Mecca (2010), if cooperating teachers effectively supervised their student teachers, the role of the cooperating teacher could build relevant classroom-based learning. Furthermore, as indicated in this study, there is a belief among early childhood cooperating teachers that student teachers come to the fieldwork only with theories that are not practical in real classroom situations. Cooperating teachers may not be convinced of the validity of the methods of student teachers. They may not understand that having student teachers in their classroom could serve as a source of their own professional development (Ganser & Koskeka, 1997; Landt, 2002, 2004).

The experience of the student teachers in their fieldwork does not appear to match the regulations of the practicum as required by most Jordanian university teacher education programme. According to these requirements, student teachers are required to observe the teaching practices of cooperating teachers, take notes, give their reactions, and discuss issues relating to their teaching approach with their cooperating teachers. Even the second phase of the practicum programme, which is termed "partial practice," does not allow cooperating teachers to leave student teachers alone while teaching (The Hashemite University, 2002).

Unfortunately, neither student teachers nor cooperating teachers follow the regulations of the practicum. In many cases, cooperating teachers assign student teachers the entire teaching responsibility from the first day they enter kindergarten and involve themselves in administrative work or take breaks. Therefore cooperating teachers often do not work with their student teachers in their own classrooms. Liebhaber (2000) suggested that cooperating teachers need to sit down with their student teacher before the fieldwork, map out specific expectations and mutually discuss goals and the different approaches to be used, as well as help the student teacher stay on track.

The lack of interaction and communication between student teachers and cooperating teachers could be a possible reason for the above-mentioned result. Therefore, formal and informal conversations between cooperating student teachers about appropriate approaches to teaching are needed. In this context, Drafall and Grant (1994) indicated that conversations between cooperating and student teachers are helpful in sharing immediate observations and discussing instructional progress.

Conclusions and implications

Based on the results of this study, it seems appropriate to make some tentative recommendations for ECTE programmes and professional development. This study emphasises that cooperating teachers are more likely to be oriented to the PH method of teaching reading in the early years education. Cooperating teachers do not support the characteristics of the WL method of instruction. The highest priority is to increase their awareness of various approaches to literacy instruction, their effectiveness in early reading instruction, including WL and balanced approaches, as well as other models of literacy instruction.

The results revealed that cooperating teachers' approach to literacy instruction is quite different from student teachers' approach. Hence, it is important for ECTE programmes to play a significant role in the selection of cooperating teachers and to ensure that they are well qualified and knowledgeable of the practicum process. This could be done by redeveloping practicum requirements to include specific standards for selecting cooperating teachers (Blocker & Swetnam, 1995).

Furthermore, universities should shoulder the responsibility for improving the professional development of cooperating teachers. This can be accomplished by enrolling them in training sessions and workshops in which they are exposed to the latest knowledge and research in the field as well as providing opportunities to acquire the skills needed to more effectively undertake their supervision and training responsibilities. What is most important is to train cooperating teachers to teach student teachers. Thus, the professional development of cooperating teachers should be a central activity in ECTE programmes. Moreover, ECTE programmes should encourage communication and interaction between cooperating teachers and student teachers.

One limitation of this study is that the sample selection was restricted to only one Jordanian public university, the Hashemite University, from one region in Jordan (Zarqa). Other universities located in other regions of the country have not been investigated. Therefore, further research with a large number of participants involved in many Jordanian universities is needed to conclusively answer the question of the proper role of cooperating teachers in Jordanian ECTE programmes and to generalise these conclusions for all classrooms.

Broadly speaking, both cooperating teachers and student teachers need a strong connection built on mutual respect. Cooperating teachers need to be eager to learn new things from their student teachers, and student teachers need to feel confident to allow this change to take place. If ECTE programmes took greater responsibility in developing standards for selecting and training cooperating teachers as well as provided more effective supervision of the fieldwork process by working more closely with the cooperating teachers, the influence of student teachers on the teaching practices of cooperating teachers would significantly increase. The knowledge, skills, and new approaches of student teachers can affect cooperating teachers and provide a recommended area of further research.

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