

Enhancing Knowledge and Teaching Skills of Grade Two Teachers who Work with Children at Risk of Dyslexia

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Abstract : Dyslexia is the most common reading-related difficulty among the school-aged population and currently, 5-10% are showing the features of dyslexia in Sri Lanka. As there is an insufficient number of speech and language pathologists in the country and few speech and language pathologists working in government mainstream school settings, these children who are at risk of dyslexia are not receiving enough quality early intervention services to develop their reading skills. As teachers are the key professionals who are directly working with these children, using them as the primary facilitators to improve their reading skills will be the most effective approach. This study aimed to identify the efficacy of a two and half a day of intensive training provided to fifteen mainstream government school teachers of grade two classes. The goal of the training was to enhance their knowledge of dyslexia and provide full classroom skills training that could be used to support the development of the students' reading competencies. A closed-ended multiple choice questionnaire was given to these teachers pre and post-training to measure teachers' knowledge of dyslexia, the areas in which these children needed additional support, and the best strategies to facilitate reading competencies. The data revealed that the teachers' knowledge in all areas was significantly poorer prior to the training and that there was a clear improvement in all areas after the training. The gain in target areas of teaching skills selected to improve the reading skills of children was evaluated through peer feedback. Teachers were assigned to three groups and expected to model how they were going to introduce the skills in recommended areas using researcher developed, validated and reliability-tested materials and the strategies which were introduced during the training within the given tasks. Peers and the primary investigator rated teachers' performances and gave feedback on organizational skills, presentation skills of materials, clarity of instruction, and appropriateness of vocabulary. After modifying their skills according to the feedback the teachers received, they were expected to modify and represent the same tasks to the group the following day. Their skills were re-evaluated by the peers and primary investigator using the same rubrics to measure the improvement. The findings revealed a significant improvement in their teaching skills development. The data analysis of both knowledge and skills gains of the teachers was carried out using quantitative descriptive data analysis. The overall findings of the study yielded promising results that support intensive training as a method for improving teachers' knowledge and teaching skill development for use with children in a whole class intervention setting who are at risk of dyslexia.

Keywords : Dyslexia, knowledge, teaching skills, training program

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