

EFFECTS OF PRIMARY GRADE LITERACY FIELD EXPERIENCES ON PRESERVICE TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY

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Abstract

Learning to read is an essential skill, yet many new teachers enter the profession unprepared to be effective literacy teachers. Teacher preparation has been at the forefront of many reforms in education. However, discrepancies still exist in how teachers are prepared to enter the profession. This study investigated preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for primary literacy instruction by the amount of field experience. Participants were preservice teachers who had been accepted into the educator preparation program at small, private universities in Texas and were seeking Early Childhood-Grade 6 certification. This article discusses the importance of field experience in the preparation of teachers for the primary literacy instruction, and describes the results of the study, which indicated that median scores were statistically significant between groups.

Keywords: self-efficacy, field experience, literacy

Learning to read is a major achievement of the first years of school for young children. If literacy instruction and acquisition are diminished, then all other educational achievements are likely to decline (International Literacy Association [ILA], 2016). These students rarely catch up with their peers without intensive instruction provided by experts (Moats, 1999). What is learned during the early grades, especially related to literacy, can make a lasting impact on how students perform in subsequent years (Bornfreund, 2011).

Teaching children to read is a challenging task and requires a set of specialized knowledge and skills. Teachers are a critical factor in the performance of students, and the instruction that teachers provide directly impact literacy achievement (ILA, 2015). According to the ILA (2016), students have a right to a highly qualified literacy educator who is well prepared and can address the diverse needs that exist in today's classrooms. The challenges that face literacy teachers today are "complicated, unprecedented, and pervasive" (ILA, 2016, p. 2). These challenges include increasing numbers of English language learners, new curriculum standards, digital technologies, and high-stakes assessments (ILA, 2016). Much recent discussion and debate have taken place concerning what should be included in the curriculum for future teachers in general and specifically related to

literacy. These conversations must be rooted in research and evidence-based practices.

Currently, there is a significant discrepancy between states in certification guidelines, credit hours needed, and field experiences provided in literacy preparation for primary grade teachers. Major components that have been identified as critical to a successful teacher preparation program include coursework, field experiences, and collaboration among those who work together in teacher preparation, with field experience being the most influential factor (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Teacher preparation for literacy instruction in primary grades is a complex issue, and the need to understand effective practices is critical.

Theoretical Framework

Self-efficacy, as it relates to teaching, is the teacher's belief in their ability to help students learn (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Teachers who begin their teaching career with a strong sense of self-efficacy build upon the belief that they can succeed and are more willing to persist through challenges rather than giving up when things are difficult (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). To some extent, the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers can become self-fulfilling prophecies because teachers who believe they will not be successful are more likely to put forth less effort and give

up easily, thus confirming their belief (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Mastery experiences, such as field experiences that involve working with students, are considered the most powerful influence in increasing self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Mastery experiences that are not too challenging or too easy provide the most significant increase in self-efficacy. These “just-right” experiences build resilience and perseverance and provide the necessary skill set to persist when faced with difficulties or setbacks. This is especially important for preservice teachers because “efficacy beliefs are considered to be most pliable early in learning” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

It is important to note that efficacy is specific to the context. Teachers may feel confident in their ability to teach one content area but feel inadequate to teach another. Accordingly, research shows that a teacher may feel efficacious for overall teaching tasks but not have a strong sense of teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). One reason that self-efficacy is so vital in literacy instruction is due to the instantaneous, complex teaching decisions made when working with students (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Thus, there is a need to better understand how to increase preservice teachers’ self-efficacy for literacy instruction.

Statement of the Problem

Research shows that educator preparation programs should provide opportunities for preservice teachers to practice what has been learned in the university classroom in a mentored setting with school-aged students to bridge theory with practice (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Research is needed to measure the gains of preservice teachers as a result of different field experiences (Otaiba et al., 2010). Capraro et al., (2010) recommend additional research to look more intensely at field experiences to determine “which of all the extra efforts are most worthwhile” (p. 147). Studies are also needed that focus on the change of teachers’ sense of efficacy for teaching reading from the beginning of the teacher preparation program through various points throughout the program (Helfrich & Clark, 2016; Kent et al., 2013). The problem is that little is known about teacher self-efficacy for specific content areas, such as literacy, and the factors that contribute to increased levels of self-efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Extensive research exists in the area of general teacher self-efficacy, but there is little research in the specific area of literacy (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). More specifically, little research has been done to study the self-

efficacy of preservice teachers for teaching reading (Haverback & Parault, 2008). This study was significant because little is known regarding the impact of the amount of field experiences on preservice teachers’ self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction. Understanding the impact can guide educator preparation programs as they design coursework and plan field experience opportunities to train preservice teachers.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there are significant differences in preservice teachers’ self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction based on varying levels of field experiences as measured by the Teachers’ Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011). This study examined preservice teachers’ perception of their ability to teach literacy to students in the primary grades, which includes early childhood through second grade. The research question was: Are there differences in preservice teachers’ sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by the amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience?

Literature Review

Although there are many topics in education that people disagree on, the importance of literacy instruction is often an area of common ground. Literacy is considered the “essential education, the learning through which all other learning takes place” (ILA, 2016). Not only is reading important in every other academic field, but it is also necessary for most aspects of life (National Research Council [NRC], 2010). What is learned during the early grades, especially related to literacy, can make a lasting impact on how students perform in subsequent years (Bornfreund, 2011). If literacy instruction and acquisition are diminished, then all other educational achievements are likely to decline (ILA, 2016).

However, learning to read is not innate (Frey & Fisher, 2010; Sousa, 2014). Children are born with the biological structure needed to learn to read, but the brain is not hardwired for reading as it is for speaking (Frey & Fisher, 2010). No area of the brain is specialized for reading, and learning to read is one of the most difficult cognitive tasks (Sousa, 2014). Reading is a complex and elaborate process that involves decoding abstract symbols into sounds that make words that have meaning when put together. In today’s society, students have to process text at high levels and be able to interpret ideas, analyze arguments, and synthesize information from multiple sources (NRC, 2010).

These are not easy tasks for students to master and are equally difficult for teachers to teach.

Teaching reading is professional work with a specialized knowledge base that must be mastered by teacher candidates (Phelps, 2009). Merely being a good reader does not guarantee that one will be a good reading teacher. To be successful, teachers must acquire specialized content knowledge, as well as the ability to combine that with effective teaching methods, also known as pedagogical content knowledge (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). In 2015, the ILA released a *Preliminary Report on Teacher Preparation for Literacy Instruction* that summarized data gathered from a variety of state department websites and state officials. The ILA noted the importance of effective literacy instruction from the very first day of school and the critical role that teachers play in helping students achieve in the foundational skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Yet, they found a lack of explicit guidelines for literacy coursework and practicum experiences in many state education department guidelines (ILA, 2015).

Components of Literacy Instruction in Teacher Preparation Curriculum

Teacher preparation programs must equip beginning teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students become effective readers and writers (ILA, 2016). Much recent discussion and debate have taken place concerning what to include in the overall preservice teacher curriculum and in the specific curriculum related to literacy instruction. When examining the components of teacher preparation programs, the most valuable for preparing preservice teachers to teach literacy are coursework, an integrated field component, and collaboration between the preservice teachers, university instructors, and teachers in the field (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). In a review of research, Copeland et al., (2011) found that the amount of coursework in reading and the opportunity to engage in practicum experiences resulted in an increase in teaching reading with competence. Substantial evidence supports the need for coursework and field experiences to build the teaching capability of new teachers and disproves fast-track programs that do not contain these necessary components (International Literacy Association [ILA] & National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2017).

Additional instructional time is essential in literacy coursework because the knowledge and skills required to teach primary students differ from what is needed to teach late elementary school students. Students in the primary grades are still developing foundational literacy skills and need specialized instruction in the areas of oral language development, print awareness, phonological awareness, and

beginning phonics. Literacy courses designed for preservice teachers seeking certification in a wide grade span such as prekindergarten through fifth or sixth grade tend to be very broad and lack focused attention on emergent and early literacy skills that are unique to younger primary grade students (Bornfreund, 2011). In Texas, a new certification band for early childhood through third grade (EC-3) was added in May 2018 with standards focusing on the science of teaching reading to provide greater coursework and training in the theory and practice of teaching early reading skills (Classroom Teacher Certification Standards, 2018). Current licensure practice across the states varies greatly and may not provide the necessary focus on emergent and early literacy.

For years, there has been debate over methodology in reading instruction. However, content knowledge and pedagogy for coursework should be grounded in rigorous, peer-reviewed research rather than ideology or politics (ILA, 2016). Unfortunately, there can be a mismatch between what research supports regarding early literacy instruction and the knowledge base of teachers (Bos et al., 2001). Teacher preparation programs must help future teachers develop a deep understanding of the knowledge and skills that successfully promote early literacy development in primary grade students (Pressley & Allington, 2015). The work of the National Research Council, the National Reading Panel, and the International Literacy Association demonstrates the consensus that beginning readers should possess six foundational skills: oral language, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension strategies (NRC, 2010). There are other essential parts of the knowledge base, including the study of multiple literacies, multimedia and multimodal texts, child development, and diverse learners, that should be covered in the teacher preparation curriculum (ILA & NCTE, 2017). Moreover, the subject matter content and pedagogy must be applied to practice. It is not enough to learn the theories of literacy development; instead, these theories must be used in authentic contexts with guidance and mentoring through field experiences (ILA & NCTE, 2017).

Field Experiences

In teacher preparation programs, the practice component typically comes through a variety of field experiences that allow preservice teachers to focus on the process of teaching (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). The practice-focused curriculum allows teacher candidates to apply what has been learned in a mentored setting where a cooperating teacher and university supervisor can provide feedback. Direct explanation and brief modeling of teaching strategies are not sufficient for helping preservice teachers transfer the strategies into planning and practice

(Kropiewnicki, 2006). More recently, some advocate a shift is needed in the focus of the teacher education curriculum from knowledge to practice with extensive opportunities for preservice teachers to participate in the interactive work of teaching in a program that is grounded in clinical practice (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2014; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education., 2010).

Many differences exist in the field experiences required by educator preparation programs. The extensive variability includes differences in an element such as design, implementation, quality of supervision, and the connection to coursework (Singh, 2017). Preservice teachers who participate in a field experience component that includes interactions with a small group of students are able to implement the content knowledge learned in the teacher education program to the school setting (Helfrich & Bean, 2011; Clark et al., 2013). Preservice teachers reported that the field experiences were valuable regardless of the amount of time spent in the field and helped them understand how to teach reading (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). In fact, field experience and student teaching are considered by some to be the most valuable components (Bornfreund, 2011). Acknowledging the impact that field experience can make on the level of preparedness for a beginning teacher is an important step in the most meaningful aspects of teacher preparation (Clark et al., 2013). Yet, there is still no consensus among teacher educators or in the research on field experience, to support a minimum or a recommended amount during teacher preparation.

Aligning Field Experiences to Coursework

A divide between theory and practice can exist in teacher preparation if there is not an intentional effort made to link the two. One way to prevent this divide is to align field experiences with coursework (Allsopp, DeMarie et al., 2006). Research shows that preparation programs should rely equally on both coursework and field experience and find ways to connect what is happening across these two components (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Pairing field experiences with coursework provides the opportunity to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Retallick & Miller, 2010). Preservice teachers need many opportunities to deepen their understanding in an environment where they can learn by doing (Lipp & Helfrich & Clark, 2016). Darling-Hammond (2014) asserts that a critically important part of teacher preparation is “extensive and intensely supervised clinical work—tightly integrated with coursework” (p. 550). The most robust programs require preservice teachers to spend significant time in the field where what they learn in their coursework is simultaneously reinforced in the field (Darling-Hammond,

2014). One of Bornfreund’s (2011) recommendations is to provide more field experiences that are specifically connected to coursework for preservice teachers in the early grades. The skillset needed in the academic world as compared to the classroom is different, and field experiences serve as a transition between the two. Research supports that the pairing of coursework and field experiences “allow preservice teachers to better explain, defend importance, and feel confident to teach using these literacy skills” (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016, p. 58).

Field Experiences in Literacy

In a study of university-based programs receiving the International Literacy Association Certificate of Distinction for effectively preparing future teachers for literacy instruction, the highest-rated programmatic feature was “carefully structured and sequenced public school-based teaching experiences, included from the first course to the end of a literacy teacher education program” (Lacina & Block, 2011, p. 343). Each literacy course included field experiences that were systematically sequenced across semesters to correspond to the appropriate knowledge and skill level of the preservice teachers. In another review of research on methods courses and field experiences for preservice teachers in the area of English and reading, Clift and Brady (2005) noticed a trend that emphasized “the importance of planned, guided, and sustained interactions with pupils (children and adolescents) within early field and student teaching settings” (p. 316). Preservice teachers’ ideas about teaching and learning changed as a result of reflecting on field experiences with individual students or small groups if they worked with classroom teachers who supported what was taught in the methods course (Clift & Brady, 2005). Even though research demonstrates the importance of a variety of field experiences, there is little evidence that states require preservice teachers to participate in literacy-focused field experiences prior to student teaching (ILA, 2015). States have mandates for the number of hours of field experience, but, at best, the requirement related to literacy is embedded.

Recently, the International Literacy Association has also reinforced the importance of field experience as it relates specifically to literacy instruction. The ILA called for literacy to be included in every aspect of clinical practice (ILA, 2016). In their latest publication on teacher preparation, the application of knowledge in authentic teaching contexts is one of the four critical quality indicators for preservice teachers’ learning (ILA & NCTE, 2017). The ILA stated that preservice teachers needed the opportunity to apply their pedagogical and content knowledge through multiple experiences in the classroom with students while being provided strong mentor support (ILA & NCTE, 2017). The need for high-quality teachers

who are well prepared to teach literacy to students is critical in today's knowledge-based society. Teacher preparation programs must ensure that all research-based components of reading instruction are thoroughly taught in coursework and closely linked to opportunities to practice in the field with students. Collaborative field-based experiences that are provided throughout the educator preparation program are essential to prepare preservice teachers to effectively teach literacy beginning in their first year of teaching.

Data Collection

The participants for this study were drawn from a voluntary convenience sample of preservice teachers who were pursuing Early Childhood through Grade 6 (EC-6) teacher certification and had been admitted to educator preparation programs at small, private, four-year universities in Texas. Data was collected at the end of the spring semester of 2019.

The levels of field experiences for this study were defined as:

- No/Introductory field experience – Preservice teachers had not participated in any direct field experience or had completed the state-required minimum of 30 hours of field experience in their certification area (EC-6) with at least 10 hours being in a primary grade (EC-2) classroom. Preservice teachers were not expected to prepare lessons, although they may tutor individuals or small groups of students.
- Reading practicum experience – Preservice teachers were enrolled in or had completed a reading methods course at the university that includes a practicum experience at a local school. As part of the practicum, preservice teachers prepared and taught reading lessons to individuals or small groups of students. A minimum of 10 hours should be at the primary grade (EC-2) levels.
- Clinical teaching experience - Preservice teachers had participated in clinical teaching, which is an all-day capstone experience during the last semester of college. A minimum of 5 weeks should be at the primary grade (EC-2) levels. During these weeks, preservice teachers

prepared lessons and taught reading in a variety of settings, including the whole class, small groups, and/or individual students.

The instrument that was utilized in this study was the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011). The purpose of the TSELI is to measure teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction. The TSELI is a relatively new, subject-specific instrument based on the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). The TSELI consists of 22 questions that examine various aspects of literacy instruction. Questions ask "to what extent" the teacher has the current ability, resources, and opportunity to implement strategies or provide instruction related to literacy. The questions are scored on a unipolar response scale with a 9-point continuum.

Data Analysis

Due to lower than expected total participants and unequal groups, the researcher determined that the Kruskal-Wallis H test, a rank-based nonparametric alternative to the ANOVA, was the more appropriate test to run to produce the most valid and reliable results. Data screening was conducted using boxplots to look for extreme outliers in the data. Assumptions that must be met for the Kruskal-Wallis H test included: one dependent variable measured at the continuous or ordinal level; one independent variable consisting of at least two categorical, independent groups; independence of observations; and similarly shaped distributions.

Descriptive Statistics

The TSELI scores were the dependent variable for this study, and the amount of field experience was the independent variable. The descriptive statistics were reported for $n = 59$. See Table 1 for descriptive statistics. Because the Kruskal-Wallis H test was used, the most appropriate measure of central tendency is the median. The median increased from no/introductory field experience, reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience, in that order. See Table 2 for median scores.

Table 1*Descriptive Statistics*

	n	M	SD	Min	Max
No/Introductory field experience	14	126.00	27.00	78	166
Reading practicum experience	35	157.34	23.81	88	192
Clinical teaching experience	10	163.20	25.65	124	198
Overall	59	150.90	28.26	78	198

Table 2*Median Scores*

	n	Mdn
No/Introductory field experience	14	129.50
Reading practicum experience	35	160.00
Clinical teaching experience	10	164.00
Overall	59	155.00

Results

The Kruskal-Wallis H test was statistically significantly different, indicating that there were differences in preservice teachers' sense of self-efficacy for literacy instruction between the field experience groups: no/introductory field experience, reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience. Median scores were statistically significant between groups, $\chi^2(2) = 13.212, p = .001$. Based on this data, the researcher rejects the null hypothesis.

Post hoc testing was conducted using the Bonferroni correction to determine the difference between groups because the null hypothesis was rejected. The post hoc test revealed that the mean increase from no/introductory field experience to reading practicum experience was statistically significant ($p = 0.002$), as well as the increase from no/introductory field experience to clinical teaching experience ($p = 0.008$). The pairwise comparison of reading practicum experience to clinical teaching experience ($p = 1.000$) was not statistically significant.

Discussion

The construct of self-efficacy, based on Bandura's social cognitive theory, is often used in educational research to determine teachers' perceptions about their

ability to yield the desired learning outcomes of all students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Mastery experiences are the most powerful influence on self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Successful teaching experiences that are "just-right" in the level of challenge boost teachers' self-efficacy dramatically and increase their belief that they will continue to be successful (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Preservice teachers need more than a direct explanation and modeling to apply what they have learned (Kropiewnicki, 2006). This study showed that the median score on the TSELI increased based on the amount of field experience, and the difference between no/introductory field experience group was statistically significant when compared to the reading practicum group ($p = 0.002$) and the clinical teacher group ($p = 0.008$).

Although coursework was not explicitly included in this study, students participating in a reading practicum experience would more than likely be enrolled in a literacy course or have previously taken a literacy course. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest a connection since this study showed a statistically significant difference between no/introductory field experience and a reading practicum experience. The results of this study also correlate with research that novice teachers whose educator preparation programs required more field experiences, over 150 hours prior to clinical teaching, had a higher sense of

self-efficacy for instructional decision-making (Maloch et al., 2003).

A review of the literature on inputs of teacher preparation programs showed that three of the most valuable components for preparing preservice teachers to teach literacy are coursework, an integrated field component, and collaboration between the preservice teachers, university instructors, and teachers in the field (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). The leading organizations in literacy education and advocacy, the International Literacy Association and the National Council of Teachers of English (2017), emphasize that there is strong evidence showing the importance of field experiences in building capacity in new teachers. Field experiences afford preservice teachers an opportunity to practice what they have learned in coursework by working with students in authentic school settings to become better at teaching (Helfrich & Bean, 2011; Clark et al., 2013). The results of this study align with prior research that shows field experience has a positive effect on preservice teachers.

The opportunity to participate in practicum experiences, along with reading coursework, showed an increase in teaching reading competence (Copeland et al., 2011). Preservice teachers who worked with small groups in classrooms that supported what they were learning showed growth (Clift & Brady, 2005). Additionally, structured practicum experiences resulted in a higher preparedness to teach reading and a better understanding of why they implemented certain strategies (Otaiba et al., 2010). The literature continues to show that field experience and student teaching are considered by preservice teachers to be some of the most valuable components in educator preparation (Bornfreund, 2011). This corresponds with the results of this study, where the reading practicum and clinical teaching demonstrated a statistically significant positive increase in the self-efficacy of preservice teachers as compared to those with no/introductory field experience. This study was significant because it examined field experience in primary literacy, which is a more highly specialized area.

Implications

Learning to read is essential in every other academic field and is necessary for most aspects of life (NRC, 2010). Although much is known about how to teach children to read, there are significant differences in the requirements of educator preparation programs in the design, implementation, and duration of field experiences (Singh, 2017; Zeichner, 2010). Recognizing this importance, the ILA (2016) called for literacy to be included in every aspect of clinical practice. The implications of this research can help educator preparation programs include

specific field experiences in literacy, especially in the primary grades, where learning to read is essential. Preservice teachers need multiple experiences working with students in authentic classroom settings that provide opportunities to apply their pedagogical and content knowledge (ILA & NCTE, 2017). Yet, not all programs offer field experiences focused on teaching young children to read.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP, 2013) requires educator preparation programs to ensure that preservice teachers develop discipline-specific concepts and principles. However, at the state level, guidelines lack detailed requirements for literacy coursework and practicum experiences (ILA, 2015). No defined set of requirements for field experiences exists, and specifically, no explicit requirements for field experiences in primary literacy. Preservice teachers reported that any amount of time spent in field experiences was valuable (Helfrich & Bean, 2011).

Without a strong research base, it is difficult to advocate for the addition of such specialized field experiences. The results of this study show a statistically significant increase when preservice teachers participate in a reading practicum field experience. These experiences, typically requiring students to teach a small group of students, provide a gradual release of responsibility in a supportive environment. Educator preparation programs have the opportunity to design curriculum that includes multiple opportunities for real-world experiences that will have a lasting impact on a teacher's self-efficacy and preparedness for teaching reading to students in the primary grades.

Based on the research on teacher self-efficacy, it is clear that these types of successful teaching experiences in beginning literacy can build a strong, positive sense of self-efficacy for preservice teachers. This foundation will serve them well as they transition and become novice teachers with their classes. Novice teachers in the primary grades who start their careers with a strong sense of self-efficacy will be able to better manage the challenges that are inherent to the first year of teaching while being ready from day one to teach the literacy skills that are so important.

Limitations

A limitation of this study relates to the sample population and the use of a convenience sample. The study focused only on six small, private schools in one state. Would there be differences if different sizes and types of educator preparation programs were included? The use of a convenience sample, collecting data from available subjects, potentially limits the diversity of the sample

population and can cause a discrepancy in the representation of groups within the sample (Creswell, 2009). Participation was voluntary, as no students were required to complete the survey. Are there differences between those preservice teachers who chose to complete the survey versus those who chose not to participate? This is further evidenced by the fact that 32 participants at least opened and started the survey but did not finish it.

Another limitation relates to the factors that were considered in the study. The study does not identify all of the possible causes of differences in self-efficacy scores, including the amount and quality of coursework, quality of the field experiences, or collaboration between the professor and the classroom teacher. How much do these factors influence the perception of self-efficacy in preservice teachers as compared to the amount of field experience?

Next Steps

This study adds to the research base on self-efficacy for preservice teachers. Specifically, it adds a focus on self-efficacy based on the amount of field experience in the area of primary literacy. Next steps to expand this research include:

1. Repeating this current study with a larger student population that includes preservice teachers from public and private universities in Texas would provide additional evidence that there is a statistically

significant difference based on field experiences in self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction.

2. A correlation study would be another area of research that could examine the relationship between preservice teachers' self-efficacy beliefs and their instructional competency as measured by the new Science of Teaching Reading assessment or the edTPA Literacy Task for elementary education.
3. Qualitative or mixed methods research would provide additional insight into the preservice teachers' perspectives on the other factors that influence self-efficacy during field experiences, such as reading practicums and clinical teaching.

Conclusion

Teachers are a critical factor in the literacy development of students (ILA, 2015). Because a positive sense of efficacy correlates to higher student achievement, educator preparation programs must provide preservice teachers with the appropriate knowledge and skills needed to help students succeed (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Field experiences, including reading practicums and clinical teaching, allow preservice teachers the opportunity to practice in authentic settings with support and feedback, and increase teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction.

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