EFFECTS OF PRIMARY GRADE LITERACY FIELD EXPERIENCES ON PRESERVICE

TEACHERS' SELF-EFFICACY: A CAUSAL-COMPARATIVE STUDY

by

Lauren E. Kirk

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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APPROVED BY:

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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. The levels of field experience included no/ introductory field experience, reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching 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. The survey measured the preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by asking how prepared preservice teachers felt to teach different aspects of literacy. The Kruskal-Wallis H was used to determine if there are differences between the groups. The study included 59 students from six small, private universities in Texas. Results of the study indicated that median scores were statistically significant between groups. Based on this data, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. Pairwise comparisons showed a statistically significant mean increase from no/introductory field experience to reading practicum experience and from no/introductory field experience to clinical teaching experience.

Keywords: self-efficacy, field experience, literacy

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my family. Education has been important in my family for as long as I can remember starting with my parents who pursued graduate degrees later in life and modeled lifelong learning. My husband, Kevin, and I have taken turns being students through the years as we have each earned advanced degrees. Our girls have grown up with a dad who served as a university administrator and a mom who worked as a teacher, education specialist, and university professor. They have been surrounded by education their entire lives!

Education opens doors to opportunities. The freedom to attend school and study the field of our choosing is a privilege. May we use that opportunity to serve God in the unique way He has gifted us and called us for His glory alone.

Acknowledgements

As a new doctoral student, I was told that the dissertation process is a marathon filled with intermittent sprints that would require a new level of discipline, dedication, and perseverance. I was reminded that the goal was to cross the finish line even though it might seem far away and take so long to get there. Along the way, I have learned that I can overcome obstacles and that the reward is worth it. I can do hard things. Small things add up and eventually grow into big things. Celebrating successes – no matter how small – provides motivation to keep going. And most importantly, the reward of crossing the finish line is worth it!

This journey is best accomplished when people come alongside to encourage and support you. I would like to express sincere and heartfelt gratitude to some of those people. I owe special thanks to my husband, Kevin, who has been my biggest cheerleader from the start of my first doctoral course. You listened when I was discouraged or frustrated, sent encouraging messages during late night writing sessions, and helped in so many other ways that allowed me to carve out time to work and write. Thank you for always believing in me and reminding me that I can do this! I love you!

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List of Abbreviations

Adequate yearly progress (AYP)

American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP)

Council of Chief State School Officer (CCSSO)

Early Childhood through Grade 6 (EC-6)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

International Literacy Association (ILA)

International Reading Association (IRA)

Interstate Teacher and Support Consortium (InTASC)

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE)

National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ)

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)

National Defense Education Act (NDEA)

National Education Association (NEA)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI)

Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Teacher preparation research is greatly increasing as the importance of effective teachers is recognized in today's knowledge-focused society and economy. Literacy acquisition is the foundation to much of learning, and educator preparation programs must prepare preservice teachers to effectively teach literacy in the primary grades. The International Literacy Association, along with other state and national organizations, recognizes the importance of preservice teacher preparation and the need to continue research to determine the most effective content and pedagogical methods. Chapter One includes a historical and theoretical overview that provides a foundation for the study. In addition, the problem statement, purpose statement, significance of the study are reviewed along with the research question.

Background

Learning to read is one of the major achievements of the first years of school for young children. It is also one of the most challenging cognitive tasks for students to accomplish (Sousa, 2014). Reading is a complex process and learning to read is not innate (Frey & Fisher, 2010; Sousa, 2014). Literacy is considered the "essential education, the learning through which all other learning takes place" (International Literacy Association [ILA], 2016, p. 2). Students who do not learn to read early in their schooling are unlikely to read well, easily master other skills, or flourish in school (Moats, 1999). If literacy instruction and acquisition is diminished, then all other educational achievements are likely to decline (ILA, 2016). These students rarely catch up with their peers without intensive instruction provided by experts, which can be costly for schools to provide (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 International Literacy Association (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. It is essential that these conversations be rooted in research and evidence-based practices.

Historical Overview

Teacher preparation has evolved over time in the United States. In the early days of teacher training, an apprenticeship model was the primary method utilized. As teacher training became more formalized, many variations still existed (Zeichner, 2014). By the 1950s, most teacher preparation occurred in a university setting as a part of education reform (Labaree, 2008). Between the 1960s and the 1990s, almost all teacher preparation occurred in the university setting (Zeichner, 2014). However, alternative certification programs became more prominent starting in the 1990s, and many teachers entered the field through these alternative routes.

Along the way, education reform continued to be a central focus of the federal and state government and other policy groups. The landmark publication, *A Nation at Risk: The*

Imperative for Educational Reform (National Commission on Excellence and Education, 1983), highlighted the challenges facing education and asserted that American schools were failing. This sparked calls for education reform in the preparation of teachers. Significant changes occurred in educational standards, assessment, and accountability because of these reform efforts (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (1996) recommended a goal of providing every student with a competent, caring, and qualified teacher by reinventing teacher preparation based on research and best practices. Teachers needed training that included extensive knowledge of their subject matter and learning theory, along with opportunities to practice through clinical experiences connected to coursework.

Since the turn of the century, various groups established more rigorous standards for teacher preparation. However, each group represented their vision of teacher education through the lens of policymakers, educators, and teacher preparation programs. The National Academy of Education worked to synthesize what was known about learning, teaching, and teacher education and to use that information to describe what beginning teachers needed to know in order to be successful (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). The framework included knowledge of learners, knowledge of curriculum, and an understanding of teaching with respect to the learners. Four critical quality indicators for prospective teachers' learning and new teachers' performance have been identified through a convergence of research evidence: knowledge development, application of knowledge within authentic contexts, ongoing teacher development, and ongoing assessments (International Literacy Association [ILA] and National Council of Teachers of English [NCTE], 2017).

Educator preparation programs must examine their curriculum to ensure that preservice teachers have adequate opportunities to gain knowledge through course work and apply that knowledge in authentic teaching situations. Recent educational reform has focused on clinical preparation that includes extensive opportunities for preservice teachers to practice in the field throughout their program (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Preservice teachers view field experiences and student teaching as the most valued parts of teacher preparation (Bornfreund, 2011). However, no core set of field experiences have been identified through research as essential and extensive variation exists between programs.

Teachers of primary grades must also be adequately prepared to teach literacy. In today's society, literacy has become increasingly important. Pressley & Allington (2015) point to three reasons why reading instruction has received more attention in recent years: people today are flooded with a variety of print information; survival today is dependent on a literate citizenry; other nations are passing America on international rankings of academic achievement, especially in reading. The shift from an industrial to a knowledge economy has focused attention on education, teachers, and teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Now, more than ever, teachers matter in the classroom as they influence student learning and are considered by some to be the key to the new knowledge society.

Theoretical Overview

Effective teachers need more than content knowledge and strong pedagogical skills. Research suggests that the belief in one's teaching ability influences teacher effectiveness (Knoblauch & Hoy, 2008). An individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully accomplish a task and handle challenges is known as self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The construct of self-efficacy is based on social cognitive theory that emphasizes that skills are learned in a social

context (Bandura, 1997). Belief in one's ability, however, is not sufficient. Individuals must also possess the skill set and incentive to act in order to achieve the expected outcome (Bandura, 1994).

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 (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). This is important because self-efficacy is established early and can be resistant to change.

Bandura (1997) proposed that self-efficacy comes from four sources including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal. Mastery experiences, such as field experiences that involve working with students, are considered to be the most powerful influence in increasing self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). When preservice teachers experience success in working with students, self-efficacy increases dramatically. Likewise, when they feel that they have failed, self-efficacy decreases, especially if it has not been established through previous positive experiences (Bandura, 1994).

It is important to note that even in education, 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). Thus, there is a need to better understand how to increase preservice teachers' self-efficacy for literacy instruction.

Problem Statement

Belief in one's ability increases motivation, effort, persistence, and resilience (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is distinct in that it is "specific to a particular task" (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998, p. 210). Preservice teachers need to have a belief in their ability to teach literacy in addition to the requisite knowledge and skills. Yet, little is known about how to cultivate higher levels of self-efficacy specifically for literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Additionally, 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 in order to bridge theory with practice (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Systematic, structured field experiences are considered one of the most critical aspects (National Research Council, 2010). However, the research base for what works to make clinical preparation effective is not adequate (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], 2010). The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning commissioned by NCATE found that clinical preparation is "poorly defined and inadequately supported" (NCATE, 2010, p. 4).

Research is also needed to measure the gains of preservice teachers as a result of different field experiences (Otaiba, Lake, Greulich, Folson, & Guidry, 2010). Capraro, Capraro and Helfeldt (2010) recommend additional research to look more intensely at field experiences in order 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, Giles & Hibberts, 2013).

From the early days of school, teachers are a critical factor in the literacy development of students (International Literacy Association, 2015). It is important to study teacher self-efficacy because a positive sense of efficacy correlates to higher student achievement and improved teacher effort and persistence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). 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).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental, causal-comparative study was to determine whether there are significant differences in preservice teacher 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). Field experiences can be defined as "early and systematic P-12 classroom-based opportunities in which teacher candidates (TCs) may observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and/or conduct research" (Capraro et al., 2010). In educator preparation programs, field experiences provide the opportunity for preservice teachers to apply what they are learning in coursework in authentic settings. Teacher self-efficacy is described as a "judgment of his or her capabilities to bring about desired outcomes of student engagement and learning, even among those students who may be difficult or unmotivated" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001, p. 783).

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 participants' levels of field experience for this study included no/introductory field experience of 10 hours of observation in a primary classroom, a reading practicum experience with at least 10 hours of teaching reading in a primary classroom to a small group of students, and clinical

teaching with a portion of the placement in primary grades. Participants participating in this study were preservice teachers who had been admitted to educator preparation programs of selected private universities in Texas. This study was designed to compare the amount of field experience with the level of teacher self-efficacy.

Significance of the Study

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 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.

According to the International Literacy Association (2016), literacy should be included throughout the teacher preparation program in all coursework and field experiences. The opportunity to apply content and pedagogical knowledge through field experiences in authentic teaching settings is one of four critical quality indicators of strong literacy teacher preparation (ILA & NCTE, 2017). The ILA recommends that students engage in a variety of field experiences including tutoring, small-group instruction, and whole-class teaching for extended periods of time. However, it can be challenging to draw conclusions from the research on field experiences due to the variations in the design and duration of the experiences of different programs (Singh, 2017). It is a challenge worth pursuing through additional research because strengthening clinical practice through field experiences in teacher preparation is one of the most important ways to improve the competence of new teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2014). This

study can benefit educator preparation programs in Texas by understanding which field experiences have the most significant impact on self-efficacy. Additionally, policy makers in Texas stand to benefit through an increased understanding of the importance of field experiences. This study contributed to the existing research regarding the field experience component of educator preparation programs and how it influences preservice teachers' self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction.

Research Question

The research question for this study was:

RQ1: Are there differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience?

Definitions

1. *Educator preparation program* – the entity responsible for the preparation of educators (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 2015).

2. *Field experience* – Field experiences are early and systematic classroom-based opportunities in which preservice teachers may observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and/or conduct research (Capraro et al, 2010).

3. *Methods course* – Education course in which interaction among instruction, student response, and learning within the course and in assigned work in schools or classrooms working with students (Clift & Brady, 2005).

4. *Self-efficacy* – Self-efficacy is a belief in one's ability to succeed or accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997).

5. *Teacher candidate* – Someone who is preparing to become a teacher (Association of

   Teacher Educators, 2016).

Summary

Teachers play a critical role in student learning in today's knowledge-based society. Teacher preparation must provide adequate opportunities for preservice teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills needed, especially in the area or literacy instruction. Additionally, teachers who develop a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to persist and work through challenges that come with teaching. This study examined the impact of different levels of field experience on the self-efficacy for literacy instruction of preservice teachers. In Chapter Two, the theoretical framework for the study, along with related literature, will be discussed in greater detail.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Teacher preparation research is greatly increasing as the importance of effective teachers is recognized in today's knowledge-focused society and economy. Literacy acquisition is the foundation to much of learning, and the curriculum of teacher preparation programs must include teaching the key components of literacy including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Currently, there is a great discrepancy between the 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 (Helfrick & Bean, 2011). Teacher preparation for literacy instruction in primary grades is a complex issue, and the need to understand effective practices is critical.

In this chapter, the theoretical framework and related literature establish the need for this study. This study uses the construct of self-efficacy because a person's belief in his or her ability to accomplish a task is positively linked to effort and achievement. The related literature includes a brief history of educational reform with an emphasis on teacher preparation, including the changing expectations of teachers and students at the turn of the 21st century. Next, the research reviews the importance of literacy and the necessary components of literacy instruction in the primary grades. Finally, field experiences to help prepare preservice teachers, especially in the area of literacy instruction, is expanded upon to establish the need for more study in this area.

Theoretical Framework

Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory and construct of self-efficacy serve as the theoretical framework for this study. The premise of this theory is that learning occurs in a social context; people learn by observing others. The social cognitive theory emphasizes the reciprocal effects between the person and what they bring to the situation, the physical and social environment around the person, and the behavior or actions of the person (Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1997), is a belief in one's ability to succeed or to accomplish a task. These beliefs are strong predictors of behavior and determine the actions, effort, and achievement of people (Bandura, 1997). However, self-efficacy expectations alone cannot produce the desired results (Bandura, 1994). The skill set and incentive to act must also be present. People with high levels of self-efficacy tend to persist when faced with difficult circumstances because they believe they can acquire the needed skills and find a way to be successful. Conversely, people with low levels of self-efficacy lack incentive, do not believe that they can acquire the skills that would lead to success, and tend to give up. Self-efficacy influences whether or not a person attempts a task, the amount of effort put forth, and the ability to sustain the effort in order to accomplish the task successfully.

Self-Efficacy in Education

In the educational realm, teacher self-efficacy can be defined as "teachers' judgment about their abilities to help students learn" (Hoy & Spero, 2005, p. 343). It is important to note that studies of efficacy look at the teacher's perceptions of competence and not actual knowledge or ability and can be overestimated or underestimated by the individuals being studied. Research

on self-efficacy in education has shown that teachers' sense of efficacy is related to achievement outcomes and students' sense of efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

To some extent, the self-efficacy beliefs of teachers can become self-fulfilling prophesies 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). However, teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy are more willing to persist when things are difficult (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Self-efficacy affects everything from teacher enthusiasm, commitment and instructional behavior to student achievement and motivation (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). A teacher's self-efficacy is established early and is often resistant to change; therefore, it is important to equip preservice teachers with the tools needed to become excellent teachers and establish a strong sense of self-efficacy.

Contributing Factors for Self-Efficacy

Although there is growing research in the overall field of teacher self-efficacy, less is known about the contributing factors, or sources, of self-efficacy and how those factors change or grow over time (Klassen, Tze, Betts, & Gordon, 2011). It is important to understand how self-efficacy beliefs form, develop, or change; however, no reliable measures have been created to measure sources of teacher self-efficacy. Most research defers to Bandura's (1997) proposal of four major influences on self-efficacy beliefs, including mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological arousal.

The most powerful influence on self-efficacy is considered to be mastery experiences, which is the result of successful teaching experiences with students (Bandura, 1997). When preservice teachers experience success in working with students, self-efficacy increases dramatically. Self-efficacy decreases when they fear they have failed if a positive self-efficacy

has not been previously established through experiences (Bandura, 1994). It is important to note that success and failure are based on perceived ability and not actual ability, as self-efficacy is tied to the belief that one can succeed. Mastery experiences that are not too challenging or too easy provide the biggest 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. When teachers feel that their teaching performance was successful, their self-efficacy increases along with the belief that they will continue to be successful (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). However, teachers who feel they have failed in their teaching performance have a decrease in self-efficacy and the expectation for failure in the future. This is especially important for preservice teachers because "efficacy beliefs are considered to be most pliable early in learning" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007).

Another major influence on self-efficacy beliefs is vicarious experiences provided by social models (Bandura, 1994). When preservice teachers observe the success of a teacher, it raises the belief that they too can be successful. A competent teacher demonstrates the necessary skills and strategies that lead to success. However, watching a teacher struggle or fail decreases self-efficacy and can have negative results for preservice teachers. The impact of this factor is influenced by degree to which the preservice teachers perceive similarity to the classroom teachers, both positively and negatively.

Social persuasion is another factor that influences the belief that success is possible through the use of verbal feedback (Bandura, 1994). Preservice teachers who are told through verbal feedback that they have the skills and strategies needed to succeed are more likely to put forth effort and persevere through difficult circumstances rather than focusing on weaknesses.

The success that results from increased effort and perseverance creates higher levels of self-efficacy and continued success through self-fulfilling prophecy.

Physiological arousal has to do with relying on the physical and emotional states in judging self-efficacy (Bandura, 2008). When preservice teachers feel stressed or anxious in their teaching situations, then self-efficacy can decrease because they are afraid of failure. Mood can also affect how the preservice teacher judges self-efficacy. A positive mood boosts self-efficacy; whereas, a negative mood causes a decline.

Teacher Self-Efficacy and Literacy Instruction

Limited research exists on the impact of teacher self-efficacy beliefs on literacy instruction (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Literacy teachers must be confident in their ability to successfully meet the needs of a diverse group of students. In one study, the self-efficacy of preservice teachers increased over the course of their preparation program (Kent et al., 2013). The largest gains occurred during the final semester of student teaching when preservice teachers were actively engaged in a classroom every day. In another study, preservice teachers who participated in a literacy course that included a practicum experience where they tutored a student in reading achieved higher levels of content knowledge and self-efficacy than those who only took the literacy course (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). Content knowledge with field experience was highly correlated with self-efficacy for teaching reading. Novice teachers who graduated from teacher education programs that required more reading coursework and field experiences reported a higher sense of self-efficacy for instructional decision-making (Maloch et al., 2003). Preservice teachers in the eight programs in the study participated in over 150 hours of field experience prior to student teaching. These field

experiences were connected to coursework and were supervised by faculty who provided feedback and mentoring.

One reason that self-efficacy is so important in literacy instruction is due to the complex teaching decisions that are made instantaneously when working with students (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011). Teachers with high self-efficacy persist when faced with challenges and seek solutions by trying new strategies. However, teachers with low self-efficacy are more likely to give up or place the blame on the students when faced with difficulties (Tschannen-Moran & Johnson, 2011).

Related Literature

Due to the crucial role that teachers play, teacher preparation in general has been at the forefront of national policy with unprecedented attention given to teacher quality and accountability (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Many nations, including the United States, have developed high expectations for teachers and have raised standards for teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). In this section, a brief historical overview of the calls for reform in teacher preparation will be given. This overview provides a necessary context for understanding the importance of literacy instruction in the primary grades and the field experiences needed to prepare new teachers to be ready from day one.

Historical Overview of Education Reform

A brief historical overview of the calls for reform in teacher preparation including policy briefs and reports from various educational entities, research summaries related to teacher preparation, and standards documents from state and national educational organizations provides the necessary context for the current demand for higher standards and increased accountability. The preparation of teachers, like that of many professions, began as an apprenticeship model,

with new teachers learning the craft by working with an experienced practitioner (Labaree, 2008). Formal education of teachers through normal schools, schools specifically for training teachers in pedagogy, emerged during the mid-18th century with the advent of the common school movement that necessitated more highly qualified teachers who had "systematic training and professional certification" (Labaree, 2008, p. 292). By the late 19th century, the demand for liberal arts education grew and the large majority of normal schools transitioned into teacher's colleges and then to state colleges. As the landscape of higher education continued to shift during the 20th century, the majority of teacher preparation moved to the university setting by the 1950s. The connection to the university and the creation of departments, schools, and colleges of education was part of the reform of teacher education (Labaree, 2008).

Another major change happened during the 1950s that escalated the national discourse on student achievement and the teaching profession—the Soviet space race (Klausmeier, 1990). The teaching profession, accused of being lax, was faulted with a portion of the blame for America falling behind the Soviet Union, and reformers sought to refurbish the image of teacher education by improving the curriculum. In response to the launch of Sputnik by the Soviet Union, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 with a focus on improving education in the areas of science, math, and foreign language to ensure that America would have highly trained individuals to compete with the Soviet Union.

By the 1960s, educational reform was influenced by the humanistic movement of the day with a focus on broad academic education and the universality of human needs (Klausmeier, 1990). Less emphasis was placed on educational methods coursework during this time as reformers emphasized a strong liberal arts education for teachers. At the national level, President Lyndon B. Johnson greatly expanded the government's role in education with the passage of the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 which more than doubled federal funding of schools and affirmed the need for high standards and accountability. This legislation was part of Johnson's larger war against poverty in America and created Title I funding for schools serving low-income families. The bill aimed to provide equal access to quality education, regardless of socioeconomic status, and to close the achievement gap (Paul, 2016).

In the 1970s, building on a foundation of research from the previous two decades and a growing research base on teacher education and teacher effectiveness, reform efforts were rapidly proposed. Teacher education programs were challenged to move from maintaining the community norms to serving as proactive change agents (Klausmeier, 1990). A backlash from the humanistic decade of the 1960s resulted in the shift in emphasis once again to pedagogical skills (Klausmeier, 1990). Many reformers proposed competency-based teacher education programs that delineated specific objectives that should be mastered and thus moved the focus to exit requirements rather than entrance requirements for teachers. As a part of these reform proposals, the emphasis moved to a more student-centered approach, focusing on the learner and the learning process rather than a teacher-centered approach.

The 1980s were viewed as the second wave of reform with numerous national calls for teacher reform (Klausmeier, 1990). In 1982 the National Education Association (NEA) published *Excellence in Our Schools: Teacher Education* with a set of standards designed to ensure that all teachers would have the knowledge and skills to be effective from the start. The report highlighted the importance of connecting theory and practice along with extensive field-based experiences throughout the teacher education program. The National Commission on Excellence in Education released the landmark document, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, in 1983. The report led to the conclusion that the entire system of public

schooling in the Unites States was failing to produce expected levels of achievement and other

countries were surpassing the United States. American students did not rank first or second in 19

academic tasks in an overall international comparison. Thirteen percent of 17 year olds were

functionally illiterate and a large number were lacking in higher order thinking skills.

Recommendations from the report cited the need for increased coursework in high school, higher

standards, and additional reform of teacher education programs.

However, this need for more qualified teachers came at a time when the United States

was nearing a serious shortage of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1984). The RAND Corporation

released a report, *Beyond the Commission Reports: The Coming Crisis in Teaching,* explaining

the dramatic change that was looming in the nation's teaching force due to older teachers

retiring, younger teachers leaving for other occupations, and a lower number of new entrants to

education programs (Darling-Hammond, 1984). Not only was the number of teachers steadily

declining, the level of academic qualification was also falling. The dilemma was how to

simultaneously reform teacher education by raising the standards for entrance to the profession

while supplying a greater demand for new teachers. The issue of quality versus quantity became

a very real problem with no easy solution in sight. Throughout the rest of the 1980s, "proposals

for the reform of teacher education emanated from a broad spectrum of scholars, national

commissions, and agencies with direct vested interests in improving the quality of our national

teaching corps" (Klausmeier, 1990, p. 50).

Sweeping changes occurred at the federal, state, and local levels during the 1990s with

significant policy activity related to standards, assessment, and accountability for K-12 students

and schools, as well educator preparation programs, following a standards-based reform effort

model (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). The shift from educational inputs to

assessing outcomes continued, and effective teachers were needed to help students achieve the more rigorous academic expectations. In *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future,* the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (1996) proposed the audacious goal of providing every student in America with a competent, caring, and qualified teacher. To accomplish the goal, the commission made several recommendations based on previous research and best practices including standards for student learning and teaching, reinventing teacher preparation, and overhauling teacher recruitment. The misconception that "anyone can teach" had been disproven in over two hundred studies (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Research on teacher effectiveness confirmed the importance of having deep subject matter knowledge, an understanding of teaching methods and learning theory, and carefully planned clinical experiences that are connected to coursework.

Many states established or revised standards for teacher certification with recommended coursework, student teaching requirements, and various competency tests in response to reform efforts of the previous decade (Darling-Hammond, 1997). Alternative paths for teacher certification, such as Teach for America, became more widespread in an attempt to provide a quicker path for subject matter experts to obtain teaching credentials (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). However, these alternative programs often had lesser amounts of educational coursework and field experiences as compared to university-based programs. Requirements between states and programs was dramatically uneven and caused serious discrepancies in teacher quality across the United States. For example, the number of new teachers who had not completed licensing requirements increased from 25% in 1991 to 27% in 1994 (Darling-Hammond, 1997). The differences between program types and state requirements continued to widen.

Another significant accountability measure was Title II of the Higher Education Amendments of 1998 that mandated annual reports from teacher education programs. The federal government was limited in what it could do to influence teacher preparation because teacher licensure occurred at the state level. However, institutions receiving federal money were required to report specific indicators of quality and certification requirements such as the passing rates of state licensure exams and the number of hours spent in student teaching. Education reform had entered an age of increased accountability of teacher education programs and the students they prepared.

Changing Expectations of Education in the 21st Century

As the United States moved from an agrarian and industrial economy to an information economy, the types of jobs, and the education required to do those jobs, changed as well. In 1990, the leading employer in most states was the manufacturing industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). The retail industry ranked first by 2003, but with the downturn in the economy during the recession of 2008, healthcare and social assistance took the lead in 34 states by 2013 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014). Many low-skilled jobs moved abroad or were automated. Technology revolutionized the ability of people to connect with each other, information became easily accessible, and powerful new tools were available for learning.

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills was founded in 2002 as a public-private partnership for the purpose of bridging the gap between knowledge and skills learned in school and those needed in society and the workplace by identifying and integrating the critical elements in schools (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2007). Four specific skills were identified by a collection of leaders from various fields: critical thinking and problem solving,

communication, collaboration, and creativity and innovation (National Education Association, 2010). Expectations for education in the 21st century were shifting in order to supply the workforce; however, the current education system was not built for such an economy or society. In an industrial economy, schools prepared students by focusing on a common process, such as five major subjects each semester, for all students (Levine, 2006). Yet an information economy required a shift in focus to common learning outcomes for all students, which were the highest in history. This shift meant that the job of teaching is fundamentally different now than that of previous generations. Thus, teachers' skills and knowledge must be strengthened if student achievement was to increase to the level needed for learning in the 21st century.

Another transformation that is occurring simultaneously is that of student demographics. American schools are becoming more diverse economically, racially, geographically, linguistically, and academically (Levine, 2006). This diverse group of students is expected to master a wider range of skills and more complex content than ever before (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In the past, students who were unsuccessful simply dropped out of school and got a low-skilled job (Levine, 2006). Now, the goal is for all students to finish high school and be college or career ready. The way forward is to raise standards in education to the highest they have ever been and prepare all students to meet those standards (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Growing evidence established that the quality of the teacher is the most influential cause of student learning and achievement (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Kirby, McCombs, Barney & Naftel, 2006; Levine, 2006). It is clear that now, more than ever, teacher preparation plays an essential role in preparing students for the economy and society of the 21st century.

Education Reform and Teacher Preparation in the 21st Century

Historically, there had been little coherence in how teachers were trained. The knowledge and skills needed for the workforce were increasing, and there was still concern nationwide that students in other countries were outpacing America's youth educationally. Debates about how to improve the quality of education have been ongoing for over a century. Previous reform efforts in education that did not include teacher preparation were doomed to fail as teachers played a central role in the transformation process in schools (Darling-Hammond, Hammerness, Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005). Newer reforms followed more of a primary prevention model with an emphasis on the professional preparation of teachers, as had been the case previously in the overhaul of medical education. The Flexner Report in 1910 highlighted the unevenness of the medical training of doctors, even though there was a growing body of medical knowledge. The report led to the transformation of medical education as the strongest programs became the model for accreditation (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

With the dawn of a new century, the rhetoric surrounding teacher education, including traditional university-based programs and for-profit and nonprofit alternative programs, escalated with conflicting claims being made regarding the implications of teacher education research (Cochran-Smith, 2005). Most research on teaching as a profession was done before the philosophical shift to an outcomes-based view of education that focused on measuring student achievement; thus, the empirical evidence of what works in teacher preparation was lacking (Levine, 2006). Teacher preparation has been through a myriad of reform efforts (Kirby et al., 2006). Many reform initiatives focused on the structure, length, or location of teacher preparation programs rather than the substance of what was taught in the coursework and the clinical experiences needed to prepare teachers (Ball & Forzani, 2009; Darling-Hammond,

2006). With the lens focused on teacher quality in the current reform movement, efforts to create more rigorous standards for teacher preparation, certification, and licensing were called for and initiated by a wide variety of groups. Numerous entities, including the federal government, state legislatures, state departments of education, local school boards, accrediting bodies, national organizations, and private foundations, put forth their standards and policies for improving teacher preparation. Yet many of these standards and policies were based on competing agendas due to the disparate political and professional agendas even though each group claimed to have research supporting their position (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005).

One of the first such policies was the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), signed into law in 2002. This legislation dramatically increased the federal role in education accountability. NCLB mandated that states test all students in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high school, although each state had flexibility to design its own test and set its own level of proficiency. Schools were also required to make "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) for all students and for all subgroups, including English language learners, special education, minority groups, and economically disadvantaged. Teachers had to meet "highly qualified" criteria that typically meant having state certification and a bachelor's degree.

Beginning in the early 2000s, the National Academy of Education committee worked to summarize and synthesize what was known about learning, teaching, and teacher education (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Their work, *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do,* described the initial understandings necessary for beginning teachers to be successful from the start of their career, as well as the ability to continue learning through reflection and evaluation. The Committee on Teacher Education, as part of the National Academy of Education, asserted that the goal for preservice

preparation was to "provide teachers with the core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that gives them traction on their later development" (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005, p. 3).

Also in 2005, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) released *Studying Teacher Education: The Report of the AERA Panel on Research and Teacher Education*, a report designed to assess the weight of the empirical evidence on the impact of teacher education policy and practice on performance, student learning, and other school outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005). The report revealed that there was not empirical evidence for many of the policies or instructional practices common in teacher preparation programs or for the reforms being pushed at the state and national levels. To clarify, the panel examined research specifically on the impact of these policies and practices on professional performance, student learning, and other school outcomes (Cochran-Smith, 2005). In an editorial summary of the report, Cochran-Smith (2005) explained that "although there are extensive, and in some cases, persuasive rationales for these practices and reform policies, which are based on politics, on 'common sense,' or on professional consensus, they are not supported by empirical evidence about their efficacy" (p. 304). This lack of research on outcomes in teacher education can be linked to many factors including underfunding, emphasis on teacher knowledge and beliefs, and the difficulty of conducting causal research due to the many confounding and intervening variables (Cochran-Smith, 2005).

Former president and professor of education of Teachers College, Columbia University and current president of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, Arthur Levine (2006) described a lack of common vision resulting in varied and sometimes opposing approaches to education reform in his book, *Educating School Teachers.* Some see teaching as a

profession, requiring extensive education prior to starting, while others view it as a craft, where learning primarily happens on the job (Levine, 2006). These fundamentally different views expanded the divide as to what, where, when, and how teachers should be educated. To complicate the situation, a possible teacher shortage was looming again near 2010 as many baby boomers were nearing retirement and the attrition rates of new teachers continued to increase (Levine, 2006). The need for more teachers, along with conflicting views of how to prepare teachers, led to another quality versus quantity conundrum. In response to Levine's work and the work of others during this time, Whitcomb, Borko, and Liston (2007) called for a study group to examine critically the separate reports and studies and work together to developa shared vision and coherent curriculum framework for teacher education.

Since 2010, various groups interested in improving teacher education recognized the importance of building on the research base and establishing new standards. These groups included the Council of Chief State School Officer's Interstate Teacher and Support Consortium (InTASC), the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) (CAEP, 2018; CCSSO, 2013; NBPTS, 2016). Each group gathered representatives across the field of education to compose updated standards; however, separate standards documents were developed rather than working together to produce one shared framework. One reason may be the fact that each group represents different members of the education community. The InTASC group is formed from the policy side of education through the Council of Chief State School Officer (CCSSO). The National Board is primarily composed of educators, and CAEP represents educator preparation programs.

Other organizations, such as the National Council for Teacher Quality (NCTQ) have advocated strongly for higher standards for educator preparation (National Council on Teacher

Quality, 2018). NCTQ is a private, non-profit advocacy group funded by grant money from

foundations and private donors and is not connected directly to teacher preparation programs or

local and state government agencies. In addition to establishing their own internal standards,

they have most recently used those standards to rate and rank teacher preparation programs,

which has exacerbated the "dysfunctional dichotomy between university programs and

alternative routes and offers little guidance for consumers, policymakers, or practitioners"

(Cochran-Smith, Keefe, Chang, & Carney, 2018, p. 3).

What have all of these reforms accomplished? According to the National Commission

on Teaching and America's Future (2016), there have been improvements in many areas,

including raising teacher education standards and increasing clinical practice, but the quality and

implementation have been uneven. When looking at education history, it seems that teacher

preparation is in a continuous, non-stop cycle of education reform proposals resulting in more

policy reports, standards documents, and legislative mandates. However, there is a consensus

that teacher preparation is the key to education reform, and most groups have a shared interest in

improving teacher preparation (Thorpe, 2014). Many similarities exist in the education reform

proposals; however, there is still not a single, agreed-upon path to teacher preparation that

defines how one becomes a teacher. Ronald Thorpe (2014), former president of the National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards, stated that a coalition of educators is needed to build

a coherent continuum from teacher preparation to accomplished teacher status. First, the

coalition must define accomplished teacher status. Then the necessary knowledge and skills can

be backloaded into the preservice teacher curriculum (Thorpe, 2014). According to Thorpe

(2014), educators can transform American education, and the opportunity to do so exists right

now.

Importance of Literacy Instruction

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, 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 is diminished, then all other educational achievements are likely to decline (International Literacy Association, 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 (National Research Council, 2010). These are not easy tasks for students to master and are equally difficult for teachers to teach.

Pressley & Allington (2015) suggest reasons that reading instruction has received more attention in recent years. One reason is that people today are flooded with a variety of print information. From books to the internet, print information abounds. Another reason is that survival today is dependent on a literate citizenry. Today's jobs require higher levels of literacy. Yet other nations are passing America on international rankings of academic achievement,

especially in reading. The shift from an industrial to a knowledge economy means that students must achieve higher levels of literacy and academic skills and has focused attention on education, teachers, and teacher preparation (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Teachers play an integral role in student learning and are considered by some to be the key to the new knowledge society (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015). Therefore, it is imperative to adequately train teachers.

Preparing Teachers for Literacy Instruction

Most people agree that every classroom should have a highly effective teacher who has been adequately trained and is sufficiently prepared to teach. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation requires the establishment of educator preparation programs to ensure that future teachers develop a deep understanding of the discipline-specific concepts and principles (CAEP, 2013). Since reading and writing are such critical and foundational skills, efforts have been made to define, describe, and evaluate effective teacher preparation for literacy instruction at the elementary grade levels. In fact, the International Literacy Association (2016) asserts that "a highly qualified literacy educator is every student's right" (p. 4). In 2015, the International Literacy Association (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).

Preparing teachers to teach reading is a complex issue and requires that teachers have the knowledge base, as well as the belief in their ability to be successful during their first years of teaching. Some of the challenges include the increase in the number of students who are English language learners, the expectation of more intervention for struggling readers, the change in curriculum due to higher standards, and the yearly high-stakes assessments (ILA, 2016). A substantial amount of federal money, over $6 billion dollars, was spent on improving reading instruction in high-poverty, low-performing schools through No Child Left Behind (International Reading Association, 2003a). However, the need for a similar investment in teacher preparation programs still exists and is needed in order to prepare beginning teachers to deliver high-quality literacy instruction. Self-efficacy for novice teachers may be related to their preparation for teaching, along with their satisfaction with first-year support and their commitment to teaching (Hoy & Spero, 2005). It is important to examine the training of teachers for literacy instruction in order to produce new teachers with high teacher self-efficacy (Helfrich & Clark, 2016).

Components of Literacy Instruction in Teacher Preparation Curriculum

Learning to read is a major achievement of the first years of school for young children. Reading is one of the most challenging cognitive tasks that students will accomplish because it is a "highly complex task that involves many interconnected and codependent linguistic processes that draw upon a variety of separate skills" (ILA, 2018b, p. 2). Teaching children to read is also a challenging task and requires a set of specialized knowledge and skills. 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. Teacher preparation programs must equip beginning teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students become effective readers and writers (ILA, 2016). When examining the

inputs 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, Keefe, Calhoon, Tanner, & Park (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 (ILA & NCTE, 2017).

Coursework and Content Knowledge Component

Coursework and content knowledge are necessary components of teacher preparation for literacy instruction. Coursework is not specifically prescribed by most states, but the state standards for teacher preparation influence the coursework that is ultimately designed by programs (ILA, 2015). According to the International Literacy Association and National Council of Teachers of English (2017), quality preparation is indicated by "an emphasis on depth and breadth of a well-defined knowledge base" (p. 4). In practice, this is not always the case. In a study of preparation requirements for prekindergarten through third-grade teachers, Bornfreund (2011) found that many programs had more breadth than depth in their coursework. Variation also exists between states as to how many courses or hours of instruction are required for primary or elementary teachers. In 2015, a survey conducted by the International Literacy Association found that less than 40% of states had a specific requirement related to literacy instruction for elementary education (ILA, 2015). Of those states with requirements, there was considerable variation with requirements ranging from three to fifteen credit hours. Twenty-four states had no literacy course requirements at all in their early childhood certification and

elementary certifications (ILA, 2015). It is difficult to ensure that all future teachers have the necessary content knowledge with such a large discrepancy in instructional time between states and educator preparation programs.

Teaching reading is professional work with a specialized knowledge base that must be mastered by teacher candidates (Phelps, 2009). Simply being a good reader does not guarantee that one will be a good reading teacher. To be successful, teachers must acquire the 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). Sources of pedagogical content knowledge include observation, subject matter knowledge, teacher education, and classroom experience which can all be obtained through extensive coursework and field experience. The International Literacy Association (2018c) recently released the newest version of the *Standards for Preparation of Literacy Professionals 2017* which outlines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become an effective literacy teacher. Although there is no one single way that an educator preparation program should be configured to teach this specialized knowledge base, the core components should be included in each program (Lenski et al., 2013).

Additional instructional time is also essential in literacy coursework because the knowledge and skills needed 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 in an effort to provide greater coursework and training in the theory and practice of teaching early reading skills (Classroom Teacher Certification Standards, 2018).   However, the educator preparation programs are not required to offer the more narrowly focused certification area and can continue to provide the broad early childhood through sixth grade (EC-6) core subjects certification. Current licensure practice across the states varies greatly and may not provide the necessary focus on emergent and early literacy.

Another potential problem with coursework is the lack of agreement or consistency between sections of the same course taught by different professors (Bornfreund, 2011). The curriculum and required reading can vary widely and may result in inconsistencies in course quality resulting in varying levels of mastery of the knowledge and skills needed to teach literacy in the primary grades. Although most programs must align to state standards, that alone does not guarantee consistency in the course content or quality in the methods of instructional delivery between sections of the same course.

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 about early literacy instruction and the knowledge base of teachers (Bos, Mather, Dickson, Podhajski, & Chard, 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 (National Research Council, 2010).

Oral Language

Oral language is an underlying skill that supports literacy learning. It is the "ability to

produce or comprehend spoken language, including vocabulary and grammar" (National Early

Literacy Panel, 2008). When children listen to books read aloud by teachers and parents and

engage in meaningful conversations with adults, their oral language and vocabulary knowledge

grows. Children need a strong conceptual knowledge foundation and verbal reasoning abilities

to understand words and concepts that will later be read independently (ILA, 2018d).

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is a foundational skill for learning to read and can be defined as the

"ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds" (Armbruster, Lehr, &

Osborn, 2001, p. 1). Sounds are blended to produce words. Students who receive training in

blending, segmenting, and manipulating phonemes learn to read more easily. Phonemic

awareness instruction positively affects early reading achievement regardless of the specific

method used (Pressley & Allington, 2015).

Phonics

Phonics instruction is an essential component in the primary grades (ILA, 2018a).

Although there has much debate over how to teach phonics, the most current research supports a

skills-emphasis approach for beginning readers (Pressley & Allington, 2015). English is an

alphabetic language. Beginning readers must learn to apply the alphabetic principle, which is the

written correspondence between letters and sounds (ILA, 2018a). Phonics instruction should be systematic and explicit in teaching the letter-sound relationships in order to be effective (Armbruster et al., 2001). Students from various social and economic backgrounds, including those having difficulty learning to read, show improvement in word recognition, spelling, and comprehension as a result of effective phonics instruction.

Fluency

Fluency is considered to be a bridge between decoding and comprehension and allows students to focus more attention on the meaning of the text (Armbruster et al., 2001). Reading fluently includes the components of accuracy, rate and expression (ILA, 2018b). Good readers simultaneously read the correct words and understand what they mean. Rate involves reading at a speed that helps the reader comprehend the text. When readers accurately and automatically read the text, they are able to use most of their cognitive energy to understand the text (Rasinski, 2012). Depending on the purpose of reading, some texts may need to be read at a slower rate than others in order to achieve comprehension. Good readers also use expression when reading, which means they read with appropriate phrasing that sounds almost effortless. They use their voice to convey and enhance the meaning of the text (Rasinski, 2012).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the meaning of words in both oral and written language used to communicate effectively (Armbruster et al., 2001). Knowing the meaning of words helps students comprehend the text as they read. Children need to be surrounded by vocabulary-rich language and opportunities to learn vocabulary in context (Pressley & Allington, 2015). Most vocabulary is learned indirectly through conversations with other people, listening to adults read aloud, and extensive reading (Armbruster et al., 2001).

Comprehension

Comprehension is the major goal of reading (Pressley & Allington, 2015). It is essential that students understand what they are reading. Comprehension can be formally defined as "constructing meaning that is reasonable and accurate by connecting what has been read to what the reader already knows and thinking about all of this information until it is understood" (Learning Point Associates, 2004, p. 30). Reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process that requires vocabulary knowledge, linguistic knowledge, and thoughtful interaction with text (Sousa, 2014). Good readers use comprehension strategies, such as monitoring comprehension, recognizing text structure, and summarizing (Armbruster et al., 2001).

The curriculum of teacher preparation programs should include, at a minimum, instruction in all five of the essential components of reading. Salinger et al. (2010) conducted research to determine the degree to which the coursework in teacher preparation programs focused on the five essential components of early reading instruction. Preservice teachers rated the coursework emphasis as being above "little" but below "moderate", or 1.66 on a scale from zero to three (Salinger et al., 2010). However, there are other important 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 applied in authentic contexts with guidance and mentoring through field experiences (ILA & NCTE, 2017).

Field Experiences

Field experience can be defined as "a variety of early and systematic P-12 classroom-based opportunities in which teacher candidates (TCs) may observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and/or conduct research" (Capraro et al., 2010, p. 131). In teacher preparation programs, the practice component typically comes through a variety of field experiences that allow pre-service teachers to focus on the process of teaching (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016). The practice-focused curriculum gives teacher candidates the opportunity 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, there are those that 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; NCATE, 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). Disagreement exists in the field of teacher preparation regarding the duration of field experiences (Singh, 2017; Zeichner, 2010). One teacher candidate may spend a full year in a classroom working with a mentor teacher as part of the clinical teaching experience; whereas, another candidate may have little to no prior experience in the classroom setting before employment as the teacher of record (NCATE, 2010).

To complicate the matter, there is no standard set of field experiences that have been defined as critical prior to becoming a certified teacher. Many questions remain unanswered regarding which types of field experiences are the most effective and the components that are a part of those experiences (Otaiba et al., 2010). In a recent study of beginning teachers, there was evidence that what was learned in the teacher education program did influence the perceptions, abilities, and understandings of those teachers (Clark, Jones, Reutzel, & Andreasen, 2013). 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.

Certain program features or conditions increase the likelihood that field experiences have the desired effect of bridging educational theory to actual teaching practice and should be considered when field experiences are designed for preservice teachers (Capraro et al., 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2014). Although there were outward differences, similarities were found in a review of seven programs that graduated teacher candidates who were prepared to be effective on day one. Common features of exemplary programs included a clear vision of good teaching

and well-defined standards that informed all courses and clinical experiences (Darling-Hammond, 2006). Furthermore, these programs included extended clinical experiences, with supervised practicums and student teaching, which were closely connected to coursework. The purpose of the field experience should be clearly articulated to the cooperating teacher (Caprano et al., 2010).

Another key factor is a developmental sequence of field-based experiences over the course of the preservice teacher curriculum. Preservice teachers should become progressively more involved in working directly with students over the course of each additional field experience. Pedagogical skills are built over time; that includes multiple fieldwork activities resulting in the preservice teacher's perspectives evolving with exposure to a variety of aspects of teaching, including planning and preparation, collaboration, career awareness, and teacher identity. For example, preservice teachers developed a more refined approach to lesson planning as field experience progressed (Bartolome, 2017). Although unique skills and dispositions will result from each type of fieldwork, all experiences will improve overall preparation. On the other hand, not all studies show an increase in self-efficacy as a result of field experience. Plourde (2002) found that preservice teachers may have a decrease in self-efficacy when they feel that their lesson has failed. To summarize, Capraro et al. (2010) concluded that "it might not be the amount of time, so much as *how* the time is spent during the field experiences, which seems to determine their effectiveness" (p. 145).

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, Alvarez-McHatton, & Doone, 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, 2016).   Those who participated in paired course work and field experience showed "enhanced abilities to define, assign importance, and relate to implications for student learning as well as develop efficacy around their use" (Lipp & Helfrich, 2016, p. 54). 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).

Another feature that allows for an essential connection between field experiences and coursework is the opportunity for reflection of the preservice teacher within a supportive learning community of peers and a faculty member that leads to immediate application back into practice (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Hoffman, Wetzel, and Peterson (2016) found benefits in a recursive cycle where preservice teachers were provided opportunities for immediate application of instructional strategies followed by reflection, feedback, and additional instruction. In this setting, the faculty member actively participated by observing and coaching during the field experience. Based on the successes or struggles of the preservice teachers during the tutorial sessions, the faculty member could review the concepts or extend course content. The ability to

differentiate in the quantity and duration of field experiences for groups is important since some preservice teachers may need additional opportunities to achieve mastery.

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 skill set 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 pre-service 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. A critical feature of distinctive literacy educator preparation programs was scaffolding using lessons that followed a gradual release of the responsibility model (Lacina & Block, 2011). Faculty members who taught the literacy courses first modeled desired practices either in methods courses or with students and were on campus during the field experiences to supervise and provide immediate feedback to the teacher candidates. This model allows time for the faculty members to debrief with the preservice teachers and reflect on what they did, how it worked, and what changes or improvement needs to be made for the next lesson. Preservice teachers need to understand more than just how to

implement reading strategies. A deep understanding of why and when strategies are used is

critical to effective reading instruction (Sampson, Linek, Raine, & Szabo, 2013). A supportive

model of field experiences allows opportunities for preservice teachers to focus on the how,

when, and why of reading instruction.

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). More time spent in the field with

support resulted in a better understanding of literacy concepts and the ability to teach using

research-based reading instruction (Heredia, 2011)

Preservice teachers who participated in structured practicum experiences in an early

literacy course demonstrated higher preparedness to teach reading based on self-ratings and

seemed better able to explain why they implemented particular strategies (Otaiba et al., 2010).

Carefully constructed tutorials can lead to growth in learning to teach literacy by helping to

connect models of practice to a critical analysis of the components of practice with the actual

engagement with students accompanied by reflection (Hoffman et al., 2016). An overview of

research specifically focused on tutorials in preservice teacher education suggests that preservice

teachers value tutorial experiences because it causes growth in knowledge and confidence in

teaching, provides essential relationship-building experiences, and supports them with a clear

structure that still allows for some flexibility (Hoffman et al., 2016). Another benefit of the

tutorial experience is the significant amount of time working with students in an individualized setting (Hoffman et al., 2016). When preservice teachers had the opportunity to work with the same student over an extended period of weeks, they were able to build close relationships with their student which helped the student to feel safe in learning and allowed the preservice teacher to personalize the curriculum (Hoffman et al., 2016). Tutorials that provide a balance between structure and flexibility allow preservice teachers to problem solve and be responsive in their teaching while still having a framework of curriculum support.

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 requirements for the number of hours of field experience, but, at best, the requirement related to literacy is embedded. Further, one survey found extensive variation in the content of literacy specific field experiences across teacher education programs in the United States (ILA, 2003b).

Recent Education Reform Related to Field Experience

Over the past several years, a key component of education reform proposals for teacher preparation programs has been to increase the amount of field experiences prior to becoming a certified teacher. The Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning called for teacher preparation to radically change by preparing all preservice teachers in programs that are completely grounded in clinical practice and linked to professional coursework (NCATE, 2010). Although there are many such exemplary programs, the need exists for "an entire system of excellent programs, not a cottage industry of pathbreaking initiatives" (NCATE, 2010, p. ii). In their most recent report, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (2016) advocates for a full year of clinical teaching with carefully

selected mentors who model exemplary instruction. Additionally, there should be structured reflection to help teacher candidates analyze their experiences and effectiveness in order to improve their instruction and student learning.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) noted that a key component in each of their early childhood standards is hands-on field experiences. They recommend that these experiences are well planned and supported by university faculty. Also, the experiences need to expose preservice teachers to a broad range of settings. In 2010, the Blue Ribbon Panel's report issued a call to transform teacher education through clinical practice and offered 10 design principles for clinically based preparation (NCATE). One of the key principles was for clinical preparation to be integrated throughout every aspect of the program with content and pedagogy built around intensive clinical experiences (NCATE, 2010). The Association of Teacher Educators (2016) selected a task force to study field experiences and emphasized their importance. However, they noted that simply adding more field experiences was not the solution. The field experiences must be deliberate and carefully planned in order to achieve the program goals (Association of Teacher Educators, 2016).

Since the groundbreaking report of the Blue Ribbon Panel, there has been an overall increase in field experiences. However, the study showed that the experiences were uncoordinated and lacked a shared understanding of clinical practice (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education [AACTE], 2018). The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education formed a Clinical Practice Commission to develop a "thorough conceptual framework and explanation of clinical practice with recommendations for implementation" (AACTE, 2018, p. 3). Their report was based on the many years of education reform research and sought to unify and operationalize clinical practice through a clear set of proclamations

which framed a common understanding of clinical practice in teacher preparation (AACTE, 2018).

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, 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). These most recent calls for education reform through clinical preparation have much in common and emphasize the need for future teachers to have extensive practice in order to be prepared from day one of their careers.

Importance of Collaboration

Another important aspect in the preparation of future teachers is a collaboration between those who are providing the coursework and field experiences. The relationship between the field experience triad of preservice teachers, university instructors, and teachers in the field is important and requires the creation of a supportive learning environment for the preservice teachers. Placements by university instructors must be intentional and are best when there are connections between what is taught in coursework and what is observed and practiced in the field experience component (Helfrich & Bean, 2011). Current teachers and future teachers can learn from each other as they collaborate in the classroom. A problem arises when preservice teachers encounter disparities between what has been taught in their coursework and what is observed or expected in the classroom. When this happens, university instructors can prepare

preservice teachers ahead of time for this possibility and provide alternatives to the inappropriate practices (Helfrich & Bean, 2011).

Summary

Calls for education reform and teacher preparation reform have increased in recent years with a variety of stakeholders, including the federal government, state departments of education, accrediting bodies, and private foundations, issuing recommendations and policies. 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. Collectively, all of the stakeholders working together can bring about improvement in literacy instruction and literacy acquisition for students. Chapter Three will describe the research design, participants, setting, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this causal-comparative research study was to determine if there were significant differences in self-efficacy for literacy instruction of preservice teachers who participated in varying levels of field experiences that emphasized literacy. This study examined preservice teachers' perception of their ability to teach literacy to students in the primary grades. The research design, research question and hypothesis, description of the participants, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis are discussed in this chapter.

Design

A quantitative, non-experimental, causal-comparative design was used for this study. Causal-comparative research designs are appropriate "to identify cause-and-effect relationships by forming groups of individuals in whom the independent variable is present or absent – or present at several levels – and then determining whether the groups differ on the dependent variable" (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 306). A causal-comparative study is the most appropriate design because it provides a reliable way to compare self-efficacy based on different levels of field experience participation. The independent variables were the different levels of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and a clinical teaching experience. The dependent variable was teacher self-efficacy for literacy instruction in primary grades.

Research Question

The research question for this study was:

RQ1: Are there differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis for this study was:

H$_0$1: There are no statistically significant differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience.

Participants and Setting

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. All eligible preservice teachers from selected universities were invited to participate. Data was collected at the end of the spring semester of 2019.

The sample came from preservice teachers enrolled in educator preparation programs at six private, four-year universities in Texas who were seeking EC-6 teacher certification. With the help of the dean or field experience coordinator at each university, all EC-6 candidates were identified. The accessible population for this study was EC-6 candidates enrolled in the educator preparation program during the spring semester of 2019. The study consisted of naturally occurring groups of undergraduate preservice teachers enrolled in the educator preparation program.

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.

According to Gall et al. (2007), the minimum number of participants required in order to obtain a medium effect size with the statistical power of 0.70 at the 0.05 alpha level is 144 in order to run a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Due to low participation 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 in order to produce the most valid and reliable results.

Instrumentation

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 (TSES) (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001).

Scoring

The TSELI consists of 22 questions which 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 that has anchors at 1 (none at all), 3 (very little), 5 (some degree), 7 (quite a bit), and 9 (a great deal). The combined possible score ranges from 22 to 198 with higher scores indicating a stronger sense of self-efficacy for literacy instruction. The questionnaire can be administered using a print version or online version and should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. A simple set of directions are included and participants read each question and respond by selecting the number from 1-9 that represents their current ability.

Instrument Development

A growing body of research has shown that teacher self-efficacy is a strong construct and impacts student outcomes (Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998). According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is not constant across domains; therefore, a need for content specific instruments exists. Little research has focused on teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about literacy instruction. Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011) used the TSES, a proven instrument to measure self-

efficacy, as the template for developing the literacy-specific instrument. The directions and response scale for the TSELI were modeled after the TSES. The questions were based on various aspects of literacy instruction included in the Standards for the English Language Arts (National Council of Teachers of English and the International Reading Association, 1996) and Standards for Reading Professionals (International Reading Association, 2004). A total of 33 questions were reviewed by a panel of four reading and literacy experts for content validity and field tested with eleven graduate students for clarity and ease of administration.

Reliability Statistics

Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine which items provided the most coherent factor structure. The result was the elimination of 11 items with low communalities or low factor coefficients. The remaining 22 items were run using single factor analysis and demonstrated strong factor coefficients of .083 to 0.63. Construct validity was established with an eigenvalue of 12.17. The instrument proved to be a reliable measure of teachers' self-efficacy for literacy instruction with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.96. Concurrent validity of the TSELI was established through a series of confirmatory factor analyses.

The TSELI was administered to a convenience sample of 648 elementary and middle school teachers in three states. The goal of this study was to test the new measure and also explore antecedents that might be related to those beliefs. The results indicated that the TSES and TSELI are related, but each offers distinct constructs that can be evaluated independently. A teacher may have self-efficacy for instructional strategies, student engagement, or classroom management, as evidenced on the TSES, but not feel efficacious for literacy instruction. The TSELI has been successfully used in a few recent studies (Shaw, Dvorak & Bates, 2010; Helfrich & Clark, 2016).

Procedures

Approval was secured from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to collecting data. Permission was requested from the IRB at participating universities, and the institutional requirements for IRB permission was followed as specified by each university. The Teachers' Sense of Self-Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) was utilized to assess the level of self-efficacy of preservice teachers to perform instructional tasks related to literacy (see Appendix A). Permission to use the instrument was granted by Dr. Megan Tschannan-Moran (see Appendix B).

The researcher contacted education deans and field experience coordinators from the selected small, private, four-year universities in Texas to coordinate participation in the study (See Appendix C). A university representative was selected to be the main point of contact for each school. Upon agreement to participate, the researcher worked with the university representative at each school to identify the current list of EC-6 candidates who have been accepted into the educator preparation program and are eligible for the study. The university representative was provided with information regarding the study, including the timeline for administration.

After IRB approval and all required university permissions were obtained, the introductory email was sent by the university representative to inform all eligible participants that they would receive an invitation from the researcher to participate in the study. The recruitment email was sent the next day to explain the study and invite participation. A link to the study was included in the recruitment email, and participants accessed the survey in Qualtrics. After one week, a reminder notifying preservice teachers about the survey was sent. Approximately one week later, a final reminder was sent notifying participants that the survey

would close at the end of the week. The introductory email, recruitment email, and reminders followed a standard format provided by the researcher (see Appendix D).

When participants clicked on the link to the study, the first page provided the consent form and check a box to give consent (see Appendix E). Additional demographic questions were included at the beginning of the survey (see Appendix F). No personal or university identifying information was collected. The time required to complete the survey was approximately 10-15 minutes.

Data Analysis

Originally, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was planned to test the null hypothesis. However, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was determined to be more appropriate due to a low number of participants and unequal group sizes. The Kruskal-Wallis H test does not make assumptions about normality or variance of data; therefore, it can be used to compare groups when those assumptions are violated or when the size of the population or the size of the groups does not meet the standards of the ANOVA. 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.

Summary

Chapter Three addressed the methodology used to evaluate the research question. Elements included the research design, participants, settings, instrumentation, procedures, and data analysis. In Chapter Four, the findings of the research study will be reported.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Chapter Four discusses the findings from the data analysis. A relatively new instrument, the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction (TSELI) developed by Tschannen-Moran and Johnson (2011), was used because it specifically measures self-efficacy related to literacy instruction. The researcher determined that the Kruskal-Wallis H test would provide more accurate results instead of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) because a minimum group size of at least 20 or 30 was not met by all groups (Warner, 2013). The Kruskal-Wallis H test is a rank-based nonparametric alternative to the ANOVA and can be used to determine if there are statistically significant differences between groups (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). For this study, the Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to determine if there was a significant difference in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction based on the amount of field experience. This chapter includes the descriptive statistics and results of the study.

Research Question

RQ1: Are there differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience?

Null Hypothesis

H₀1: There are no statistically significant differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience.

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

Surveys were emailed to 408 eligible participants from six participating universities. Despite three email invitations to participate with a clickable link that could be opened on a computer or on a cell phone for convenience, only 95 students opened and started the survey. Of those 95 students who began the survey, 94 participants agreed to the consent form. However, only 63 students completed the entire survey for a response rate of 15.44%. Of the 63 completed surveys, 59 were included in the study. The researcher timed the request toward the end of the semester when students had completed enough of their current semester's field experience to reflect that in the level selected.

One male and 58 females completed the survey. Since the sample only included students pursuing Early Childhood-Grade 6 (EC-6) teacher certification, this is consistent with the overall elementary teacher population being primarily female. The majority of the sample was upperclassmen. See Table 3 for classification. At most universities in Texas, students must have at least 45 credit hours to be admitted to the educator preparation program; therefore, it was expected to have a larger percentage of upperclassmen. There was little diversity in the ethnicity of the population with the majority of participants being white. The Texas Education Agency categories were used to classify ethnicity. See Table 4 for ethnicity.

Table 3

Classification

	n	%
Senior	34	57.6%
Junior	21	35.6%
Sophomore	4	6.8%

Table 4

Ethnicity

	n	%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	3.4%
Asian or Pacific Islander	1	1.7%
Black	5	8.5%
Hispanic	7	11.9%
White	44	74.6%

Results

Data was exported from Qualtrics into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to perform the statistical analysis. The researcher screened the data and conducted the assumption tests required for the Kruskal-Wallis H test prior to analyzing the results. The alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests. This section includes the results of the data screening, assumption tests, and the null hypothesis.

Data Screening

Data screening included reviewing the data for discrepancies and creating boxplots to test for extreme outliers. The researcher examined the raw data and discovered two participants had entered all ones on the survey and one participant had entered all nines in a very short time indicating that the data was not valid. The researcher ran the box and whisker plot and two outliers were found in the data set, including one extreme outlier. The extreme outlier was removed, and the remaining data was determined to be valid for use. See Figure 1 for the box
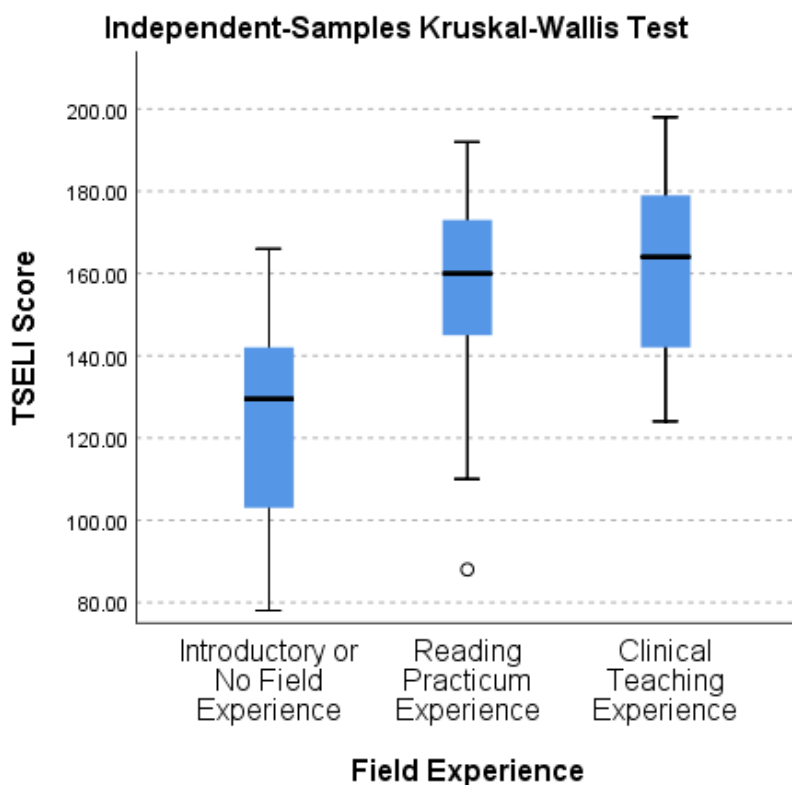
and whisker plot.

Independent-Samples Kruskal-Wallis Test

Figure 1. Box and whisker plot.

Assumption Tests

A Kruskal-Wallis H test was conducted to test the null hypothesis to determine if preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction was different based on the amount of field experience. The assumptions for this test include the following: 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 (Lund Research Ltd., 2018). If the distributions are determined to be similar, then inferences can be made about the differences in the medians between the groups. The researcher

examined the boxplots and determined that the shapes were similar enough for all groups based on a visual inspection of a boxplot.

Results of Null Hypothesis

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 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.

Summary

Chapter Four discussed the findings from the Kruskal-Wallis H test used to address the research question. Included in this chapter were the research question, null hypothesis, descriptive statistics, data screening, assumption testing, and results for the null hypothesis. Chapter Five will include discussion, implications, and limitations of the study findings along with recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study examined preservice teachers' perception of their ability to teach literacy to students in the primary grades by amount of field experience. Chapter Five includes a discussion of the findings, implications, and limitations of the research. In addition, recommendations for future research are addressed along with a final summary.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine whether there are significant differences in preservice teacher 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). This quantitative, non-experimental, causal-comparative study posed the research question: Are there significant differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no/introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience? The researcher surveyed the current literature on self-efficacy, education reform, teacher preparation, the importance of literacy instruction, and components of literacy instruction in teacher preparation curriculum to answer the question. Examining the impact of field experiences in a definitive grade band and content area can inform educator preparation programs whether a need exists for specialized requirements in field experiences for preservice teachers.

The construct of self-efficacy, based on Bandura's (1977) social cognitive theory, is used often in educational research to determine teachers' perceptions about their ability to yield the desired learning outcomes of all students (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy tend to attempt tasks, put forth more effort, and find ways to

accomplish the task. Self-efficacy affects teacher commitment and instructional behavior and is related to student achievement outcomes (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Because efficacy beliefs are most impressionable early in learning, it is important to research the self-efficacy of preservice and novice teachers and watch for trends that show how self-efficacy changes over time.

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 in order 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 ($p = 0.008$).

Previous research suggested that preservice teachers' self-efficacy increased over the course of their preparation program (Kent et al., 2013). This study supports that finding. However, the research by Kent et al. (2013) also showed that the largest gains occurred during clinical teaching when preservice teachers were in the classroom every day. This study had only a small increase in the median score that was not statistically significant when comparing a reading practicum to the final semester of clinical teaching. One reason for this difference might be the intentional narrow focus of this study on a specific grade band and content area rather than the overall teaching experience that encompasses a larger amount of knowledge and skills required to be successful. Another study demonstrated that preservice teachers who tutored a student in reading as part of a reading practicum experience included in literacy course had

higher levels of self-efficacy than those who only took the course (Leader-Janssen & Rankin-Erickson, 2013). 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 important in every other academic field and is necessary for most

aspects of life (National Research Council, 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 International Literacy Association (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 provide field experiences focused on teaching young children to read.

CAEP requires educator preparation programs to ensure that preservice teachers develop

discipline-specific concepts and principles (CAEP, 2013). 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 own 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.

<div align="center">**Limitations**</div>

All research has limitations that must be acknowledged in order to properly understand the study and provide perspective for future studies. One limitation of this study relates to the sample population and the use of a convenience sample. The study focused only on small,

private schools in one state. Although the study included six different universities, the number

of respondents from each university is unknown. Would there be differences if public

universities were included? Are the results generalizable to educator preparation programs in

other states? The use of a convenience sample, collecting data from available subjects,

potentially limits the diversity of the sample population and can cause 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 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?

A third limitation is the use of a self-reporting survey that uses a Likert scale. Individual

perceptions are different; therefore, participants could interpret the scale differently. Did the

participants overestimate or underestimate their ability? Finally, because of a small sample and

unequal group sizes, the statistical test used to analyze the data was changed from a parametric

test to a nonparametric test. Using a nonparametric test usually results in a loss of sensitivity.

Would the results be different with a larger sample size and the use of an ANOVA? Although

these limitations exist, this study still adds to the research base on field experience in educator

preparation programs. If self-efficacy increases as a result of field experiences in a specific

subject area and grade band, then it is important to continue to explore the amount, type, and quality necessary to this topic.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study adds to the research base on self-efficacy for preservice teachers. Specifically, it adds a focus on self-efficacy based on amount of field experience in the area of primary literacy. Additional studies to expand this area 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. This study could also be repeated across states, although it would be important to compare state requirements for educator preparation programs as those are prescribed at the state level.

2. Longitudinal studies that examine the change of preservice teachers' self-efficacy starting at the beginning of the educator preparation program through at least the end of the program would provide more information on how teacher self-efficacy develops over time and as a result of different field experiences. Studying the peaks and valleys over time would shed light on how different types of experiences influence growth of self-efficacy. It would also be helpful to analyze the amount of field experience and coursework specifically in the area of primary literacy to see how those inputs affect self-efficacy. (Helfrich & Clark, 2016; Kent et al., 2013).

3. A correlation study would be another area of research that could show how the different factors such as amount of coursework, amount of field experience, type of

field experience, level of teacher or university support, and feedback influence preservice teacher self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction.

4. 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.

5. Finally, it would be useful to consider these same research questions with preservice teachers who are preparing to teach literacy at the intermediate grades (3rd grade-6th grade) to determine what inputs, specifically field experiences, best prepare preservice teachers to have a strong sense of self-efficacy for teaching literacy to older students. Although there is some overlap in the knowledge and skills needed to teach primary grade literacy and intermediate grade literacy, there are enough differences to make this a topic worthy of additional research.

Summary

Teachers are a critical factor in the literacy development of students (ILA, 2015). Because a positive sense of efficacy correlates to higher student achievement, it is imperative that educator preparation programs 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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APPENDIX A

TSELI Instrument

http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch

APPENDIX B

Permission to Use Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction

William & Mary
School of Education

MEGAN TSCHANNEN-MORAN, PhD
PROFESSOR OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

January 12, 2019

Lauren,

You have my permission to use the Teacher Sense of Efficacy for Literacy Instruction Scale that I developed with Denise Johnson, for your study. The proper citation for this measure is:

> Tschannen-Moran, M. & Johnson, D. (2011). Exploring literacy teachers' self-efficacy beliefs: Potential sources at play. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*, 751-761.

You also have my permission to use the Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale (formerly called the Ohio State Teacher Sense of Efficacy Scale), which I developed with Anita Woolfolk Hoy, in your research. You can find a copy of both measures and scoring directions on my web site at http://wmpeople.wm.edu/site/page/mxtsch . Please use the following as the proper citation:

> Tschannen-Moran, M & Hoy, A. W. (2001). Teacher efficacy: Capturing an elusive construct. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 17*, 783-805.

I've also attached the directions to access my password-protected website where you can access the Teaching and Teacher Education article where the measure was introduced.

All the best,

Megan Tschannen-Moran
William & Mary School of Education

APPENDIX C

Request for University Participation in Study

My name is Lauren Kirk, and I am a faculty member in the educator preparation program at Howard Payne University. Currently, I am a doctoral candidate at Liberty University pursuing the Ed.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. I plan to defend my proposal in the coming weeks and obtain IRB approval from Liberty so that I can conduct my research in April.
The participants for my study will include students admitted to small, private educator preparation programs in Texas who are working toward EC-6 certification. The research question for this study is: Are there differences in preservice teachers' sense of efficacy for literacy instruction by amount of field experience to include no field experience, introductory field experience, a reading practicum experience, and clinical teaching experience? The participants will complete an anonymous online survey that has no identifying personal or institutional information.

I would like to include students from the ████ University educator preparation program in my study. What are the necessary steps to obtain approval from ████ University?

Thank you so much for your assistance.

Lauren Kirk

APPENDIX D

Recruitment Letter

Dear Student:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to determine if there significant differences on literacy instruction self-efficacy levels of preservice teachers who participated in different levels of field experience, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you have been admitted into the educator preparation program at your university, are pursuing EC-6 teacher certification, are 18 years of age or older, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief online survey. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes for you to complete the procedure listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, go to [webpage] and click on the link provided. LINK HERE

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kirk
Ed.D. Candidate, Liberty University

Recruitment Follow-Up Email

Dear Student:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The purpose of my research is to determine if there significant differences on literacy instruction self-efficacy levels of preservice teachers who participated in different levels of field experience.

Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is [Date].

If you have been admitted into the educator preparation program at your university, are pursuing EC-6 teacher certification, are 18 years of age or older, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief online survey. It should take approximately 10-15 minutes for you to complete the procedure listed. Your participation will be completely anonymous, and no personal, identifying information will be collected.

To participate, go to [webpage] and click on the link provided. LINK HERE

A consent document is provided as the first page you will see after you click on the survey link. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please click on the survey link at the end of the consent information to indicate that you have read the consent information and would like to take part in the survey.

Sincerely,

Lauren Kirk
Ed.D Candidate, Liberty University

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

Effects of Primary Grade Literacy Field Experiences on Preservice Teachers' Self-Efficacy:

A Causal-Comparative Study

Lauren Kirk
Liberty University
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of the differences on literacy instruction self-efficacy levels of preservice teachers who participated in different levels of field experience. You were selected as a possible participant because you have been admitted to the educator preparation program at your university and are pursuing EC-6 teacher certification. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Lauren Kirk, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is determine whether there are significant differences in preservice teacher self-efficacy for primary literacy instruction based on varying levels of field experiences.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- Complete a survey regarding your feelings of preparedness to teach reading to students in primary grades. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.
Conflicts of Interest Disclosure: The researcher serves as a professor at Howard Payne University, one of the university sites where data will be collected. To limit potential conflicts

the study will be anonymous, and the dean of the School of Education, rather than the researcher, will send all correspondence to students, including the recruitment and follow-up emails. This disclosure is made so that you can decide if this relationship will affect your willingness to participate in this study. No action will be taken against an individual based on his or her decision to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with your university. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please exit the survey and close your internet browser. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Lauren Kirk. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at lkirk3@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Meredith Park, at mjpark@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

APPENDIX F

Demographic Questions

1. Please select your gender.
   Male
   Female

2. What is your ethnicity?
   American Indian or Alaskan Native
   Asian or Pacific Islander
   Black, Not of Hispanic Origin
   Hispanic

3. What is your age?
   18-23
   24-29
   30-39
   40 or older

4. What is your current classification?
   Freshman
   Sophomore
   Junior
   Senior
   Graduate Student

5. How many courses have you taken in reading and/or literacy?
   1
   2
   3
   4
   5+

6. If you have taken the TExES EC-6 Core Subjects test, on which attempt did you pass the English Language Arts and Reading section?
   I have not taken it.
   I passed on the first attempt.
   I passed on the second attempt.
   I have not passed this section yet.