Examining Literacy Specialist Candidates' Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Leadership Competencies Before and After Internships in Schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine differences in the self-efficacy beliefs of 25 literacy specialist candidates in three leadership areas before and after 15-week internships in schools. The three leadership areas, identified by university faculty as important to the leadership role of literacy specialists in schools today, were (1) serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents; (2) conducting staff development; and (3) engaging in literacy program development and coordination. Paired-sample t-tests used to evaluate pre- and postsurvey scores at the end of the 15 weeks suggest self-efficacy beliefs in all three categories grew significantly over the course of the internships. Using Bandura's (1986, 1997) framework and the leadership competencies to code and analyze interviews, electronic communications, and reflective papers, the author shares examples of how candidates at the top and bottom of the group in self-efficacy growth compared in interpreting self-efficacy-related information during the course of the internships. Implications for graduate literacy programs are discussed

Keywords: **self-efficacy beliefs, literacy internships, literacy leadership, literacy specialists, reading specialists, teacher preparation**

The role of literacy specialists in schools today has changed significantly from in the past, when literacy specialists (also referred to as reading specialists) worked primarily with struggling readers. Driven in part by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law No. 107-110) and the ensuing pressure for schools to raise reading achievement test scores, increasingly, literacy specialists are expected to take on more leadership roles (Bean, Kern, & Goatley, 2015; Galloway & Lesaux, 2014; International Literacy Association, 2015, 2018; International Reading Association [IRA], 2000; Professional Standards and Ethics Committee of the IRA, 2004; Shaw, 2007; Shaw, Smith, Chesler, & Romeo, 2005). Despite these expectations, literacy specialists and other specialized literacy professionals (e.g., literacy coaches, instructional coaches, interventionists) report they do not always feel prepared for the new leadership roles. For example, according to Bean, Kern, and

Goatley's (2015) large-scale national survey, an overwhelming majority of specialized literacy professionals indicated they felt the need for more experiences enabling them to serve as more effective literacy leaders. Regardless of their specific literacy professional roles, respondents reported their greatest need was for more school-based learning experiences. Respondents felt such experiences were particularly important for developing greater understanding of how to function as leaders in schools by working collaboratively with adults to improve instruction and student learning.

Related to this change in the role of literacy specialists, Quatroche and Wepner (2008) found a majority of university faculty in literacy specialist preparation programs acknowledged the importance of the literacy specialist's leadership role in schools, and most noted their institutions offered leadership courses to prepare their candidates. However, less than half of the 233 literacy/language arts faculty surveyed indicated their universities required practica for working with classroom teachers in school settings. As Shaw et al. (2005) concluded after reviewing graduate reading and literacy program reports submitted by institutions seeking IRA National Recognition status, it appears many institutions have not yet figured out how to address the evolving role of the literacy specialist today or how to effectively prepare their candidates to fulfill their new roles in schools as literacy leaders.

In response to the dearth of research on effective ways to prepare literacy specialist candidates for their new leadership role, Quatroche and Wepner (2008) called for studies of what teacher preparation programs based on different program models are doing to prepare their candidates for the new literacy leadership roles, the nature of their candidates' specific learnings, and conditions associated with cultivating new learnings (Bean et al., 2015; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008). Further, Mongillo, Lawrence, and Hong (2012) called for research evaluating how candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and perceptions of themselves as leaders change at different points during their preparation programs.

The present study is a response to these calls for research. In particular, it was designed to examine the differences in literacy specialist candidates' self-efficacy beliefs in their leadership competencies at the beginning versus the end of the candidates' 15-week internship experiences in schools. It also looks at how the candidates in the top and bottom third of the group in terms of their self-efficacy growth interpreted self-efficacy-related information differently during the internship related to serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents.

Theoretical Perspective

Bandura's (1986) literature related to social cognitive theory guided the study. Bandura's theory posits that individuals' self-efficacy, or beliefs about their abilities to perform activities, affects ongoing and future performance of the activities. Furthermore, an individual's self-perceptions impact activity choices, effort exerted, amount of anxiety experienced when engaging in tasks, persistence, and perseverance. As such, self-efficacy affects motivation and learning. Bandura (1986, 1997) asserted individuals form their self-efficacy perceptions by interpreting information from four sources: mastery experiences, vicarious experiences, verbal and social persuasions, and physical and emotional states. *Mastery experiences* are tasks in which an individual displays competence, according to the individual's own interpretations. Through *vicarious experiences*, students learn by watching others. *Verbal and social persuasions* involve encouragement from others. Finally, *emotional and physiological states*, such as anxiety and stress, or the reduction of such negative states, as interpreted by an individual, also inform self-efficacy beliefs.

Bandura theorized mastery experiences have the strongest impact on the development of self-efficacy, and a number of studies support his hypothesis (e.g., Ali, 2012; Britner & Pajares, 2006; Byars-Winston, Diestelmann, Savoy, & Hoyt, 2017; Lent, Brown, Gover, & Nijjer, 1996; Luzzo, Hasper, Albert, Bibby, & Martinelli, 1999; Usher & Pajares, 2008).

Over time, scholars have investigated the various sources of self-efficacy beliefs using quantitative and qualitative measures (e.g., Ali, 2012; Bates & Khasawneh, 2007; Britner & Pajares, 2006; Hutchinson, Follman, Sumpter, & Bodner, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Palmer, 2006; Srisupawong, Koul, Neanchaleay, Murphy, & Francois, 2018; Usher & Pajares, 2008; Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). Based on their critical review and critique of studies using both methodologies to investigate this area, Usher and Pajares (2008) concluded that despite the research conducted to date, there is still a lack of research on some of the intricacies of self-efficacy development, such as the importance of each self-efficacy source at different stages in an individual's professional development. Some research suggests observing models can be particularly informative for individuals who have had little experience with which to form a judgment of their competence in a particular area (Zeldin & Pajares, 2000). It is also unclear how, for some students, the challenges they encounter seem to strengthen their self-efficacy beliefs, while for others, adversity impacts their confidence in negative ways.

The present study provides insights in these areas. It examined differences in the self-efficacy beliefs of literacy specialist candidates who were all novices to teaching, at the beginning versus the end of their literacy leadership internship experiences in schools, which occurred toward the end of their 5-year graduate literacy program. It also examined how candidates in the top third of the group in self-efficacy growth versus the bottom third compared in their interpretations of important information related to self-efficacy development.

Context of the Study

The participants (referred to as candidates in this study) were all graduate students enrolled in an Internship in Literacy practicum course. This course was required of all candidates in their final year of the 5-year graduate reading master's program at their university. At the time of the study, all of the candidates had completed their elementary education and special education certifications and were working toward reading specialist certification during the fifth year. For their 15-week internships required for the Internship in Literacy course, candidates arranged their own placements and set their own schedules, which involved working one full day per week in schools under the supervision of a cooperating literacy specialist. On the other weekdays, candidates were engaged in other course work for the 5-year program. The goals for the Internship in Literacy course included understanding the roles and responsibilities of literacy specialists, instructing and assessing children with a variety of literacy abilities, and interacting with parents, teachers, and administrators to serve the literacy needs of children. The Internship in Literacy course met five times face-to-face during the semester so candidates could share experiences, reflect on new learnings, ask questions, and address issues that came up during the internships. Over the course of the other weeks when the class did not meet face-to-face, candidates were required to post response logs in the university's learning management system used for the course. Concurrent with their internships, candidates were enrolled in three other courses: Interventions in Literacy, Writing in the Classroom, and Planning and Organizing Literacy Programs. Candidates were asked to use their readings from these other courses as a lens for reflecting on their experiences during the internship.

The assignments for the Internship in Literacy course were as follows: (1) a daily log consisting of a brief handwritten outline of all internship duties (to help the candidate keep track of activities completed on an hourly basis to help with reflections on these actions online), which was signed by the cooperating literacy specialist; (2) weekly online response logs, reflecting discoveries made, meaningful situations in the internship with connections made to theoretical concepts learned or concepts presented in the professional literature, as well as questions raised, to which the course instructor responded online; and (3) a five-page final paper/reflection describing the significance of the internship for the candidate as a literacy educator, with a synthesis of new understandings about teaching literacy and a statement about what the candidate needed to do in the future to enhance professional knowledge.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the role of a 15-week internship in the evolving self-efficacy beliefs of literacy specialist candidates in various leadership competencies (see Appendix A for the leadership competencies). Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. Are there statistically significant differences in the self-efficacy beliefs in leadership competencies of candidates enrolled in a 5-year literacy specialist preparation program before versus after their 15-week internships with literacy specialists in schools?

2. How did candidates who ranged in self-efficacy growth at the end of their internships vary in their interpretations of self-efficacy-related information during the course of their internships?

Research Methodology

This study used a mixed-method research design involving the collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. This research design was chosen because it was deemed best suited for gaining an in-depth understanding of candidates' self-efficacy beliefs and effectively answering both research questions.

Participants

A convenience sample of 25 graduate students was used, all of whom were enrolled in an intact Internship for Literacy course at a private university in the northeastern United States during the semester when the study took place. All of the students were completing their final year of a 5-year master's program. In addition, all were novices in terms of teaching experiences. As noted earlier, at the time of the study, all candidates had completed their elementary education and special education certifications and had chosen to continue in their studies during the fifth year in order to pursue reading specialist certification. It should be noted that candidates in the program are encouraged to acquire at least 2 years of full-time teaching experience prior to seeking a position as a literacy specialist, as recommended by the International Literacy Association (2015).

Candidates were primarily White, younger than 30 years of age, and from middle-class or affluent communities in the northeastern and mid-Atlantic states. All candidates gave consent to participate in the study, and all procedures were followed in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the IRB-approved research protocol for the project.

Data Collection

Data were collected from the candidates in the form of Likert-style pre- and

postsurveys (see Appendix A) administered at the beginning and end of the internships, weekly online communications with the internship professor, final papers, and follow-up interviews with three candidates who completed their internships at three contrasting school sites (i.e., a high-poverty urban school, a middle-class urban school, and a middle-class suburban school). The survey used for this study was an adaptation of the survey created and used by Quatroche and Wepner (2008) to measure university faculty members' perceptions of the importance of developing literacy specialists' leadership skills. Quatroche and Wepner drew from the following sources in developing the items on their survey: *Teaching All Children to Read: The Roles of the Reading Specialist* (IRA, 2000) and an article by Bean, Swan, and Knaub (2003) in *The Reading Teacher* on reading specialists in schools with exemplary reading programs.

For each of the 27 items on the pre- and postsurveys, candidates self-reported their levels of confidence in various leadership competencies. The competencies fell into three categories: *serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents; conducting staff development; and engaging in literacy program development and coordination* (Bean et al., 2003; IRA, 2000; Quatroche & Wepner, 2008).

Data Analysis

The study used quantitative and qualitative research techniques in analysis of the collected data. For the quantitative analysis, survey items in each of the three categories were summed into category scores. Next, three paired-samples t-tests were run to see if the average of each of the category scores changed from pre- to postsurvey.

In addition, in order to code the online communications, reflective papers, and interview data, I developed a list of start codes aligned with the conceptual framework, with feedback solicited from another professor in literacy education (see Appendix B). Prior to coding, the audiorecorded interviews were transcribed and then shared with the candidates interviewed in order to solicit their feedback on accuracy. Then codes were created for Bandura's (1986, 1997) hypothesized four sources of self-efficacy (see Appendix C) in connection with each leadership competency on the survey, using the guidelines outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013). Also, codes were added, as needed, throughout the coding process. As ideas and insights into the meanings of the coded data occurred during the coding process, they were recorded in the margins of the documents, and these notes were used to generate initial pattern-based themes. I served as primary coder. In addition, a graduate assistant in the teacher education program coded a subset of each data source to check the accuracy of the coding process. Percentages of agreement were at least 80% for each data source, with differences resolved by discussion.

Additionally, candidates were ranked by self-efficacy growth (i.e., from most to least or no growth) in all three leadership areas based on their scores in each of the leadership areas on the survey. The purpose was to identify the top third and bottom third of the group in each leadership area in order to compare how candidates in each group interpreted information important to developing self-efficacy beliefs.

More specifically, after each candidate's scores for each leadership area on the pre- and postsurvey were totaled (separately, for each candidate in each leadership area), the differences in the pre- versus postsurvey scores were calculated for each candidate in each leadership area in order to obtain measures of each candidate's changes in self-efficacy beliefs in the three leadership areas. Next, the score change data were used to rank the candidates within each leadership category, from those who exhibited the most change, or growth, in self-efficacy to those who exhibited the least growth, no growth, or a

decrease in self-efficacy. In most cases, the score change was a positive number, indicating an increase in self-efficacy beliefs for a leadership area; however, in some cases the score was 0, indicating no change in self-efficacy beliefs, or a negative number, indicating a candidate's self-efficacy beliefs in a specific leadership area decreased.

Next, the rankings were used to identify the top third (eight candidates) and bottom third (eight candidates) of the group for purposes of the qualitative analysis. In particular, the focus was on comparing the candidates' interpretations of information related to Bandura's (1986, 1997) four sources of self-efficacy in connection with specific leadership competencies (which were measured on the survey). The codings on the three data sources identified candidates' interpretations of information to be compared for the top third and bottom third.

Results

Pre/Post Differences in Self-Efficacy Beliefs

Paired-sample t-tests were conducted to evaluate changes in the candidates' pre and postsurvey scores as measures of self-efficacy growth at the end of the 15-week internship experiences. Results suggest the candidates' self-efficacy beliefs in all three categories of leadership competencies grew significantly over the course of the 15-week internships. First, there was a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy in skills associated with candidates who exhibited high and low growth in self-efficacy beliefs at the end of the internships related to serving as a resource to teachers, administrators, and parents from the start of the internship ($M = 34.29$, SD = 3.97) to the end ($M = 36.96$, SD = 4.43), t(23) = 2.92, p < .008 (two-tailed). There also was a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy in skills related to providing staff development from the beginning of the internship ($M = 9.08$, SD = 2.22) to the end ($M = 12.16$, SD = 2.13), t(24) = 5.34, p < .000 (two-tailed). Finally, there was a statistically significant increase in self-efficacy in skills related to leading literacy program development and coordination from the beginning of the internship ($M = 31.76$, SD = 5.61) to the end ($M = 37.52$, SD = 7.07, t(24) = 3.99, p < .001 (two-tailed).

Differences in Interpretations of Self-Efficacy-Related Information

As noted earlier, the qualitative results pertain to candidates' interpretations of self-efficacy-related information in connection with the following category of leadership competencies measured on the survey: s*kills related to serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents.*

Framing the challenges encountered differently. Candidates in the top and bottom thirds of the group in self-efficacy growth experienced a number of overlapping challenges during the 15-week internship as they worked with their cooperating literacy specialists. Each group, however, tended to frame the challenges encountered in different ways; that is, those in the top third viewed the challenges as opportunities for learning to a greater extent than those in the bottom third, who tended to interpret the challenges they met as cause for concern. For example, candidates in both groups noted practices observed that conflicted with the theoretical understandings they developed during their graduate studies. They commented on selection of tests used with questions focused on lower level thinking, large groups used for instructional work with struggling readers, and synthetic methods applied in conjunction with scripted programs that placed little emphasis on comprehension. According to Bandura (1986, 1997), observations of models performing tasks in ways that are interpreted by the observer as unsuccessful are hypothesized to

decrease self-efficacy. Although these practices observed were interpreted as inappropriate by candidates in both groups, Ellen, an intern in the top third of the group in terms of growth in self-efficacy beliefs in skills related to serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators and parents, noted that her cooperating literacy specialist assisted teachers with their struggling readers by using Orton-Gillingham with finger tapping and phoneme segmenting and blending, leveled readers, and a heavy emphasis on literal recall. Ellen's electronic post directed to her internship course instructor illustrates how she perceived that her observations of what she considered to be a less-than-ideal model actually presented an opportunity for building her professional skill set:

> My literacy specialist seems to view reading as decoding and word-calling. Also, the questions she asks about the text are purely text-based, so it seems that higher-level thinking is out of the question. Her "What is the point?" response to my DR-TA/DL-TA explanation was frightening. Still, I see this as a good challenge. It is possible that I will work in a school where word-calling and decoding are seen as "reading." This could be a good opportunity for me to find ways to incorporate other opportunities, activities, and higher-level thinking questions.

Another common challenge noted by a majority of the candidates was a shifting focus on preparation for the state tests as the test date approached during the spring semester when the internships occurred. In particular, two candidates at underperforming schools described excessive amounts of time devoted to test preparation and distressing signs of anxiety in children and school staff alike. However, each candidate took a different approach in how she interpreted her cooperating literacy specialist's excessive time spent with children in test preparations. For example, Karen, a candidate in the top third, viewed her time spent observing her cooperating literacy specialist in these circumstances as an opportunity to fill in gaps in her knowledge base related to the interpretation of test data:

> The literacy specialist I work under who is also test coordinator for the district once again apologized for having the state test preps. But I'm happy to say I'm learning a lot about data collection and analysis. This is something I know will be helpful to me in the future.

Additionally, her final reflective paper suggested her perceived learnings in this area further relieved some of her anxieties related to testing:

> This semester I came into the internship nervous because I did not truly understand how to effectively implement an instructional program based off a student's performance on the battery of tests. I now feel very comfortable in designing and implementing an assessment-driven instructional plan. I was especially happy to learn everything I did about the state tests. In fact, I think I learned the most about testing.

According to Bandura's (1986, 1997) theoretical perspectives, positive emotional states (or reduced negative emotional states), as in Karen's case, are hypothesized to strengthen self-efficacy.

Cindy (bottom third) interpreted her observations of her cooperating literacy specialist and the events and circumstances surrounding the state test preparation at her school site quite differently. In fact, Cindy's comments suggest her views exacerbated her anxieties and thus, according to Bandura (1986, 1997), were likely to play a role in undermining her self-efficacy beliefs, which in this case related to how she would handle

issues related to schoolwide testing in her future teaching practice. In one of her weekly, online communications with her internship instructor, Cindy wrote:

> Today I was overwhelmed by issues concerning preparations for the state test. I was quite taken aback by the students' anxieties and the teachers' apparent desperation. It made me truly question how I will react to this type of stress.

Observing versus discussing and the ability to infer important leadership traits. Observing rather than merely discussing literacy specialists' leadership roles played an important role in candidates' ability to infer important leadership traits. Candidates in the top third, on average, interpreted information related to more than double the number of different leadership roles as those with no growth. Not surprisingly, this group also had greater opportunities to observe their cooperating literacy specialists in roles as literacy leaders. Their "vicarious experiences" (Bandura, 1986, 1997) directly observing their cooperating literacy specialists' leadership roles were linked to several factors including work with specialists who assumed leadership roles integral to their positions; work with specialists who possessed effective leadership skills, according to candidates' interpretations; and internship schedules that allowed candidates to be present when leadership roles were performed.

For those in the bottom third, a number of factors appeared to interfere with opportunities to observe effective literacy leaders. These factors included working with literacy specialists who engaged primarily, or exclusively, with children and working with literacy specialists who performed so many roles that they frequently were called away, leaving the candidate to perform other activities unrelated to leadership and often in spaces isolated from other school staff.

Although most of the candidates identified traits important to many aspects of the literacy specialist role (e.g., flexibility, good organization skills, ability to develop rapport), direct observations of leadership roles resulted in inferences about traits more specific to leadership. This direct observation also allowed for inferring traits in ways not possible based on mere discussions of leadership roles. For example, after observing her cooperating literacy specialist prepare a packet of graphic organizers to share with first- and second-grade teachers, which the specialist had found useful when she was a classroom teacher and thought would be valuable for these teachers in reading and content areas, Judy (top third) noted in an electronic posting:

> This experience demonstrated to me that a good reading specialist is proactive in helping teachers with their students and does not wait for a teacher to come to the reading specialist seeking help.

In contrast, when Amy (bottom third) was asked in an interview what leadership skills her cooperating literacy specialist drew on in performing a leadership role, she responded:

> Well, it's hard to tell because these are all things that she told me about, not that I saw. It's hard when you go on the same day every week because you see the same things. The schedule could be different on Monday and Tuesday, but I was only there on Mondays, so it was always the same.

The value of recognizing how internship experiences filled in knowledge gaps. According to the interpretations of candidates in the top -third, experiences they saw as filling in gaps in their knowledge base or completing their skill sets also relieved their anxieties related to their future practice. For example, Jean noted in her final reflective

paper:

> Of everything I did at my internship, I most appreciate the work I was able to do as I supported Mrs. C. in her first-grade classroom. Until now, I had little experience in early literacy instruction. One of my worries regarding early literacy instruction is the strict requirement for some literacy programs to include synthetic phonics. Even though the Project Read program emphasizes synthetic phonics, I now can see how a teacher is able to supplement the lessons with context.

Kay's posting suggests increased comfort with serving on an instructional support team in the future as a result of her vicarious experience (Bandura, 1986, 1997) observing her cooperating literacy specialist function effectively as part of a Child Study Team during her internship:

> It was extremely helpful to see a Child Study Team meeting. Now I feel if I was a classroom teacher, learning support teacher, or literacy specialist, I would know what my role would be more clearly. Without this experience, I would have been overwhelmed by the terminology used.

Judy's post illustrates how her direct observation of the literacy specialist filled important gaps in her knowledge base and skill set related to emergent literacy assessment:

> Today I watched the literacy specialist test two kindergarten children using the Metropolitan Readiness Test (MRT). I found this experience valuable because it exposed me to a test I have never seen before. I must admit, before this, I had limited knowledge on how you assess young students.

Importance of observing literacy leaders' interactions in shared spaces. As a pattern, candidates in the top third identified numerous occasions when they observed their cooperating literacy specialists enacting their leadership roles in shared spaces (e.g., classrooms, hallways, lunch rooms, resource rooms) with teachers and parents, although only rarely with administrators. These interactions involved sharing strategies, ideas, materials, and assessment results; modeling techniques; conducting demonstration lessons; and conferencing with teachers and parents, among other roles observed. For example, based on her observation of her cooperating literacy specialist interacting with teachers during lunch, Lisa (top third) commented in an electronic posting:

> I was able to see that many of the classroom teachers look to the reading specialist for help and direction. In the lunch room, Mrs. T. showed one teacher the results she got from giving her the same informal reading inventory given in the beginning of the year. The teacher seemed surprised and unaware the student had made such progress. The teacher said she was glad Mrs. T. had shown her these results because now she knew could better target the instructional areas needed based on the shared results.

As noted, sometimes the support for classroom teachers was informal and occurred in passing in the hallways as the specialist served as a "friendly ear" to teachers. Kay (top third) observed a number of these exchanges, as noted in her final reflections:

> One of the things I loved about working with my literacy specialist was seeing just how casual and informal many of her interactions were with other teachers when she was providing support. Not only did I witness the formal support my literacy specialist provided for a third-grade teacher each week, but I also

saw how much support she was able to give all the teachers just by stopping and chatting in the hallway for a minute or two. As we would walk through the hallway to pick up students from each class, my literacy specialist was often stopped by teachers who would ask her questions about how to most effectively teach certain reading strategies or how to best support the students who were struggling readers.

Interactions also occurred synchronously and asynchronously in the literacy specialist's resource room, as Judy indicated in a weekly electronic exchange with her instructor:

My literacy specialist posted a sign-up sheet on the door of her resource room so teachers could come around if they needed a resource, and I noticed the teachers use it. She also had multiple copies of texts they can borrow from her, if they need them. Teachers also stop by to ask for help with a skill or other issue.

On the other hand, according to the candidates in the bottom third, verbal interactions with teachers, parents, or administrators focused on literacy matters were more uncommon, because either the specialist conducted pullout instruction in spaces away from the teachers' classrooms or the exchanges that did occur tended to focus on other, non-literacy-related matters. For example, Amy (bottom third) worked with a literacy specialist/teacher leader who assumed a number of administrative roles unrelated to literacy. In an interview, Amy described the lack of literacy-related interactions involving her cooperating literacy specialist at her school internship site:

At that school, I feel like, as much as people go to the literacy specialist, there's also not a lot of communication on the level of academics and students. I feel like it's a lot more of just like friendly conversation. Not really based on teaching. For example, I pulled students to work with for my interventions assignments, and the teachers never asked what I was doing, what books I was using, why I was taking them out of a classroom. The two first-grade teachers don't really communicate and collaborate together, and I think that pretty much is the same with every grade level in the school.

Amy's cooperating literacy specialist/teacher leader had many roles and was frequently called out of the building to attend to matters related to her teacher leader role. For example, the cooperating literacy specialist regularly assumed the duties of the principal if the principal was called away. At times she even attended out-of-building administrative meetings if the principal could not be present. During state testing, the cooperating literacy specialist was particularly busy because she was in charge of all aspects of the assessment, which involved working with the guidance counselor and organizing all of the assessment materials. When the literacy specialist was not available, Amy was asked to take on other tasks, such as leveling books or pulling out children to work with them on her own in a spare room away from the children's classroom. Working in isolation, apart from teachers and other school staff members, restricted Amy's opportunities for vicarious experiences and verbal and social persuasions related to leadership competencies, theorized by Bandura (1986, 1997) to be valuable sources contributing to developing self-efficacy beliefs.

Discussion

This study suggests a 15-week, school-based internship has the potential to play a valuable role in fostering literacy specialist candidates' self-efficacy beliefs related to leadership competencies expected of literacy specialists in schools today. As the

quantitative data analysis suggests, overall, candidates experienced significant growth in each of the three categories of leadership competences over the course of the 15-week internships. Furthermore, the qualitative data analysis identified critical factors related to the literacy specialists with whom candidates worked as well as important factors related to the candidates themselves, which likely influenced the amount of self-efficacy growth candidates experienced. For example, candidates placed with exemplary literacy specialists who actively engaged in all three key leadership areas and who did not assume so many roles that they were called away frequently and unable to engage fully with candidates made the greatest gains. Also, candidates who displayed flexibility and a willingness to attend on- and off-site locations, as needed, in order to increase their opportunities to directly observe key leadership roles in action made the most notable self-efficacy gains. Reflecting on the challenges the candidates encountered, while embracing the challenges as learning opportunities, appeared to be beneficial to self-efficacy growth as well.

Another important outcome of the study relates to Bandura's (1986, 1997) theorized notion that mastery experiences have the strongest impact on the development of self-efficacy. As Usher and Pajares (2008) suggest, the strength and influence of each source varies by context. Information related to vicarious experiences and emotional/physiological states was noted by all candidates to a greater extent than mastery experiences and verbal and social persuasions, which were relatively rare. This is not surprising given that all of the literacy specialist candidates in this study were novices to teaching. Moreover, there was greater evidence of these latter two sources of self-efficacy beliefs in the data of candidates in the top third versus the bottom third of the group. In addition, for every candidate in the top third, the number of positive emotional and physiological states coded outweighed the negative ones, which was not the case for candidates ranked in the bottom third. These findings support Usher and Pajares's suggestion that the strength of each self-efficacy source varies by context.

Lastly, in a review and critique of studies investigating Bandura's theorized sources of self-efficacy, Usher and Pajares (2008) observed most investigations were limited in that they focused on assessing the anxiety students experienced, or other negative responses, with regard to their measures of emotional and physiological states. Usher and Pajares urged future researchers to consider investigating factors that appear to influence students' interpretations of their capabilities linked to enhancing self-confidence. The qualitative analysis for this study makes a contribution in this area. For example, the study highlights ways in which candidates in the top third framed challenges encountered as opportunities for learning. These perceptions contrasted with candidates in the bottom third in self-efficacy growth, who tended to view challenges met as cause for concern, contributing to increased anxiety levels.

Implications for Literacy Specialist Preparation Programs

This study has important implications for faculty in literacy specialist preparation programs. First, the findings suggest the importance of faculty assuming an active role in securing internship placements that meet the requirements of preparing literacy specialist candidates in all three leadership areas (i.e., serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, and parents; conducting staff development; and engaging in literacy program development and coordination). In the current study context, candidates made their own arrangements for their internships, and at some of the sites, the cooperating literacy specialists worked exclusively with students, for example, and did not engage in all of the literacy leadership roles candidates needed to experience. Also, the findings clearly

demonstrate the need for candidates to maintain some flexibility in their scheduled days for attending the internship sites in order to see leadership roles in all three areas. Attending on the same day each week may prevent candidates from seeing literacy specialists engage in leadership roles in all three areas. Directly observing the leadership roles appears to be important; merely discussing the leadership roles of literacy specialists was not enough for candidates to infer the important traits of exemplary literacy specialists serving in these roles. Rearranging the internship schedule, on occasion, so that the candidate can attend the internship on a different day, or even attending a leadership role conducted off-site, may be important. The findings also suggest the importance of finding placements where exemplary literacy specialists do not assume so many roles that they are called away frequently and unable to engage fully with candidates.

The findings of this study also suggest the value of faculty helping candidates reflect on not only the challenges encountered during their internships, but also the learning opportunities they present. The candidates in the top third who made the greatest self-efficacy growth tended to frame the potential challenges faced in positive and instructive ways. This finding relates to the work of others who have found the benefits of a positive perspective in adverse contexts (Carver & Scheier, 2005; Gardner, 1997; Seligman, 1990). More research in this area is needed.

Limitations and Areas for Future Study

Of note, the survey used for the quantitative analysis was a self-report instrument and, therefore, a possible limitation to the study. Candidates may have chosen responses that did not accurately reflect their self-efficacy beliefs. However, given Bandura's (1997) emphasis on the need to focus on how individuals interpret information related to self-efficacy, as opposed to objective measures of performance, a self-report instrument was deemed useful, accompanied by qualitative analysis of the interview, reflective papers, and online communication data, using Bandura's theoretical ideas as a framework for providing further insights.

Also, given the limited length of the 15-week internship experience, it is possible candidates' growth in self-efficacy beliefs indicated by quantitative analysis of the surveys may not endure as candidates complete the graduate program and move on into their professional careers in schools. Future research in this area is needed, as is further research of other internship models where students attend school sites 4 or 5 days per week and for greater lengths of time (e.g., 30 weeks). Nevertheless, the findings suggest the potential value of even short-term, school-based internships.

About the Author

Nina L. Nilsson, Professor Emerita in the Teacher Education Department at Saint Joseph's University, teaches graduate and undergraduate literacy courses for elementary, middle school, and secondary teachers and literacy specialists. Her research interests include teacher preparation and the professional development of literacy professionals.

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demonstrate the need for candidates to maintain some flexibility in their scheduled days for attending the internship sites in order to see leadership roles in all three areas. Attending on the same day each week may prevent candidates from seeing literacy specialists engage in leadership roles in all three areas. Directly observing the leadership roles appears to be important; merely discussing the leadership roles of literacy specialists was not enough for candidates to infer the important traits of exemplary literacy specialists serving in these roles. Rearranging the internship schedule, on occasion, so that the candidate can attend the internship on a different day, or even attending a leadership role conducted off-site, may be important. The findings also suggest the importance of finding placements where exemplary literacy specialists do not assume so many roles that they are called away frequently and unable to engage fully with candidates.

The findings of this study also suggest the value of faculty helping candidates reflect on not only the challenges encountered during their internships, but also the learning opportunities they present. The candidates in the top third who made the greatest self-efficacy growth tended to frame the potential challenges faced in positive and instructive ways. This finding relates to the work of others who have found the benefits of a positive perspective in adverse contexts (Carver & Scheier, 2005; Gardner, 1997; Seligman, 1990). More research in this area is needed.

Limitations and Areas for Future Study

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Appendix A

Pre/Post Survey of Self-Efficacy Beliefs in Leadership Competencies

Name: Date:

A Survey:

How confident do feel in your skills related to each item below?

Please take some time to fill out this survey. For each item, indicate how confident you feel in your skills related to each item below. Shade in the circle that most closely matches your feelings at this time. Please try to be as honest as you can in responding. Thank you for your participation.

I feel confident in my ability to:

1. Assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies, or materials that can enhance instruction and assessment.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. Model strategies or techniques for teachers, as needed.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. Support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Conduct demonstration or collaborative lessons, as needed.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

5. Support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable about the teaching of reading.

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

6. Serve as a mentor for new teachers.

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

7. Serve on instructional support and student personnel teams.

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

8. Support parents by meeting with them and suggesting how they can work with their children.

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

9. Serve as a "friendly ear" for teachers who want to talk about issues, problems, or ideas about reading instruction and assessment.

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

10. Provide instructional support/guidance to paraprofessionals (aides).

    ◯   ◯   ◯   ◯

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

11. Work with librarians, speech therapists, counselors, and psychologists, as needed.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Skills Related to Role as Provider of Staff Development

I feel confident in my ability to:

1. Work with teachers in planning and conducting professional development in the schools.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. Lead professional development workshops.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. Work closely with the principal in setting a schedule and making decisions about professional development for teachers.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Conduct workshops focused on the interpretation of test results.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Skills Related to Role as Leader of Literacy Program Development and Coordination

I feel confident in my ability to:

1. Assist in writing and revising the curriculum.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

2. Serve as a leader on curriculum committees.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

3. Look for and assist in the selection of new materials, and assist in the piloting of new materials across the curriculum.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

4. Coordinate observing and conferencing with classroom teachers.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

5. Develop and coordinate ways to build home-school connections by working with both parents and teachers.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

6. Assist in the development and selection of assessment instruments for use across school or school district contexts.

   ○   ○   ○   ○

Strongly   Somewhat   Somewhat   Strongly
Agree   Agree   Disagree   Disagree

7. Provide instructional guidance to aides, volunteers, and tutors across the school or school district.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. Communicate information about the school or school district reading program to various audiences.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. Maintain a literacy center or location for various literacy materials for the school or school district.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

10. Share results of school or school district assessments with the public.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

11. Coordinate schedules for reading specialists and classroom teachers in the school or school district.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

12. Coordinate testing schedules within the school or school district.

○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Thank you! ☺

Appendix B
List of Start Codes (Examples)

Leadership competency (abbreviation)	Start Code

Resource to teachers (RT)

Mastery experience (ME)

Assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies, materials (ISTMAT)	RT-ME-ISTMAT
Model strategies or techniques (MOD)	RT-ME-MOD
Support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)	RT-ME-KNO
Conduct demonstration or collaborative lessons (DEMO)	RT-ME-DEMO

Vicarious Experience (VIC)

Assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies, materials (ISTMAT)	RT-VIC-ISTMAT
Model strategies or techniques (MOD)	RT-VIC-MOD
Support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)	RT-VIC-KNO
Conduct demonstration or collaborative lessons (DEMO)	RT-VIC-DEMO

Verbal and social persuasion (VSP)

Assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies, materials (ISTMAT)	RT-VSP-ISTMAT
Model strategies or techniques (MOD)	RT-VSP-MOD
Support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)	RT-VSP-KNO
Conduct demonstration or collaborative lessons (DEMO)	RT-VSP-DEMO

Physical and emotional states (PE)

Assist teachers by suggesting ideas, strategies, materials (ISTMAT)	RT-PE-ISTMAT
Model strategies or techniques (MOD)	RT-PE-MOD
Support teachers in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)	RT-PE-KNO
Conduct demonstration or collaborative lessons (DEMO)	RT-PE-DEMO

Resource to administrators (RA)

Mastery experience (ME)

| Support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO) | RA-ME-KNO |

Vicarious Experience (VIC)

      Support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)   RA-VIC-KNO

Verbal and social persuasion (VSP)

      Support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)   RA-VSP-KNO

Physical and emotional states (PE)

      Support administrators in becoming more knowledgeable (KNO)   RA-PE-KNO

Definitions of Bandura's (1986, 1997) Four Sources of Self-Efficacy,
Adapted for the Study

Self-efficacy source	Definition	Example
Mastery experiences	Tasks related to a literacy leadership role (i.e., serving as a resource to classroom teachers, administrators, or parents; onducting staff development; or engaging in literacy program development and coordination) that a candidate performs and interprets as successful. Mastery experiences judged by the candidate as successful are hypothesized to raise self-efficacy; tasks performed and judged by the candidate as unsuccessful are hypothesized to lower self-efficacy.	"I learned I am proficient at…" "I can confidently say I…"
Vicarious experiences	Experiences candidates have when they observe others performing tasks related to one of the three leadership roles. Observing successes, as interpreted by a candidate, is hypothesized to increase self-efficacy; observing failures, as interpreted by the candidate, is hypothesized to lower self-efficacy.	"I had the opportunity to sit in on an intervention meeting the literacy specialist had with the school psychologist and special education teacher. I could tell the others looked up to her and valued her input."
Verbal and social persuasions	Encouragement or supportive messages candidates receive related to their leadership experiences during their internships in schools. Positive verbal messages and social encouragement, candidates exert more effort and maintain the persistence required to succeed. Messages interpreted by candidates as discouraging are hypothesized to undermine, or lower, self-efficacy.	"Afterwards, the literacy specialist told me I did a good job at the conference."

Self-efficacy source	Definition	Example
Physical and Emotional states	Positive or negative physical and emotional states experienced by candidates during their internships with literacy specialists in schools. Positive physical and emotional states (e.g., optimism, a good mood) are hypothesized to strengthen self-efficacy; negative physical or emotional states (e.g., pessimism, anxiety) are hypothesized to lower self-efficacy.	"I was thrilled when my literacy specialist told me she was going to use some of my activities." "I felt overwhelmed by the growing anxiety in the students and the desperation of teachers with preparation for the state test."