Early Career Teachers' Self-Efficacy for Balanced Reading Instruction

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Abstract: *According to Bandura (1986; 1997), perceptions of efficacy are based on four sources: enactive attainment; vicarious experience; physiological and emotional states; and verbal persuasion. The factors affecting Early Career Teachers' self-efficacy for reading instruction are closely related to these four sources. It is not difficult to imagine an Early Career Teacher practicing within a 'source vacuum' as he or she attempts to grapple with the methodologies and strategies necessary for a balanced reading program. How, then, do they rate their teaching efficacy for this area of the curriculum? And which types of professional learning opportunities do they believe have heightened their self-efficacy for task-specific elements of reading instruction? Based on interviews and literature analysis, the findings suggest that enactive attainment and vicarious experiences are two sources of self-efficacy that need to be included in a focused manner in Early Career Teachers' professional learning for reading instruction.*

Introduction

There is a strong relationship between early reading success, and later reading and academic success (National Research Council, 1998; Torgesen, 2002) and it has been observed that a significant number of Australian students do not make sufficient progress when learning to read (Coltheart, & Prior, 2007; Hempenstall, 2009; Westwood, 2008). Although a child's socio-economic status can play a significant role in their progress (Berliner, 2009; Krashen, 2004; Annanat, Gassman-Pines, Francis, & Gobson-Davis, 2011), an effective teacher is a very important factor in the reading achievement of students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gambrell, Malloy, & Mazzoni, 2007; Hall, & Harding, 2003). There is no one reading program that can replace a teacher who utilises a number of best practice strategies and resources to support student learning. Teachers must, therefore, provide instruction that maximises student outcomes in reading.

Managing, organising and delivering reading instruction during a Literacy Block in a primary school setting can be fraught with difficulties, especially for Early Career Teachers, who are the focus for this research. The Literacy Block, in various forms, has been implemented Australia-wide in Independent, Catholic and public primary schools since the late 1990s, although it is not necessarily mandated instruction (Ainley, & Fleming, 2000; Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 2010b). There is a great deal of professional learning on offer for classroom primary teachers right across Australia to address issues surrounding the Literacy Block. A Literacy Block generally consists of a significant amount of time dedicated to reading instruction and practice, as well as time for writing instruction and practice. The model of teaching for these workshops is based on the notion of 'scaffolding' (Bruner, 1985; 1990) and is known as the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), where modelled, shared, guided and independent reading and writing activities are implemented each day. Within the reading workshop, in particular, issues of time management, behaviour management, implementing

literacy centres, teaching modelled, shared and guided reading, and catering for diversity within the classroom, are some of the specific elements that need to be considered by the Early Career Teacher (ECT) and they are affected by the levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) held by the ECT.

Self-efficacy has been defined as " . . . the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organise and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). Self-efficacy beliefs are a powerful influence on one's motivation to attempt a task, on the amount of effort one puts forth, and on the resilience one displays in spite of setbacks (Bandura, 1977). For classroom teachers, in general terms, heightened or lowered perceptions of self-efficacy can have an effect on how long one remains in the profession (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007), on levels of satisfaction (Hoy, 2000), and on student achievement (Anderson, Green, & Loewen, 1988). Research also suggests that self-efficacy is most malleable early in a teacher's career and that perceived levels of self-efficacy are resistant to change (Bandura, 1997). It can be hypothesised that Early Career Teachers (that is, teachers in their first or second year of their profession) who possess a heightened sense of self-efficacy with regard to reading instruction would plan their literacy lessons with greater effectiveness, organisation and enthusiasm (Allinder, 1994). They would also be willing to discuss, ask about and try new practices and methodologies for teaching reading (Cousins & Walker, 2000) and be more willing to persist with struggling students, being less inclined to refer them to Learning Support teams (Soodak & Podell, 1993).

While initial professional experience undertaken during undergraduate study offers opportunities for pre-service teachers to observe experienced teachers, the focus of such observation is often part of a wider and more general consolidation and extension of classroom teaching and management skills. For many students, a significant component of the final extended practicum is spent teaching full days, with little chance for focused observation of reading lessons. Furthermore, although many Early Career Teachers receive support during their first two years of teaching in the form of professional development and networking days, for a number of reasons they do not often get a chance to observe other expert teachers of reading. As a result, ECTs' self-efficacy for reading instruction tends to be low and they over-rely on 'teacher-proof' resources and programs to teach reading, rather than delivering more effective, balanced reading lessons which reflect constructivist rather than teacher-directed learning principles (Cambourne, 2002). How can these practices be prevented?

Aim and Purpose of the Research

At the time of the study, the researcher was a Learning and Literacy Support Teacher in a small primary school in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, where ECTs are those considered to be in their first two years of practice. Examples of excellent practice by Early Career Teachers were observed by the researcher during reading lessons as part of her role. It is no surprise that when lessons were successful, ECTs demonstrated a much greater confidence and enthusiasm for teaching reading. Lessons that were not successful in terms of student behaviour, achievement and engagement, left ECTs feeling unable and unwilling to put forth more effort into that particular area of instruction. Informal conversations with these teachers highlighted the great need they felt for further professional development in the area of reading instruction. With a view to creating a workplace that could more effectively support the learning of our Early Career Teachers, this study investigated the specific areas of reading instruction for which ECTs have high levels of self-efficacy, as well as the types of professional development which they believed may have increased self-efficacy for specific areas of reading instruction.

The intention of this research is not to argue for change in pre-service teacher education at institutions in Australia, as a fairly recent Federal Report achieves this (Department of Education, Science & Training, 2005a) and research is ongoing in this area (Dawkins, Ritz, & Louden, 2009); rather, to determine the best way to raise the efficacy expectations of ECTs for reading instruction. The aim is to move toward improved delivery of professional learning opportunities for ECTs in the area of reading instruction. Specifically, the purposes of the research were to explore the particular areas of reading instruction for which a sample group of ECTs have lowered levels of efficacy, as well as the types of professional learning these Early Career Teachers think have been—or would have been—worthwhile during their first year or two of teaching. In particular, the following questions were considered:

- How do Early Career Teachers rate their self-efficacy for this area of the curriculum?
- For which specific areas of reading instruction do ECTs have high levels of self-efficacy?
- What do they believe are the antecedents of heightened self-efficacy for reading instruction? What types of professional learning may have contributed to this?
- What opportunities could be offered to ECTs to heighten their levels of self-efficacy for reading instruction?

Interviews were undertaken with four Early Career Teachers in the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. The data provides a rich description of the beliefs of these ECTs which could prove useful information upon which to base school decisions about training and mentoring, and can assist schools and systems to identify, design and implement more effective professional learning opportunities to address the effective teaching of reading. By identifying areas of high self-efficacy, we can make some assumptions about areas of reading instruction which do not require further development as well as those which may benefit from further training. Such training opportunities could assist ECTs to access best practice methodologies and understanding of the teaching of reading which were not learned during pre-service training as well as heighten ECTs' efficacy expectations for reading instruction.

Background/Review

This research is sharply focussed on two theoretical frameworks: balanced reading instruction (Cassidy, & Cassidy, 1999/2000; Holdaway, 1980; Pressley, 2006) and self-efficacy. Within the context of balanced reading instruction, the research considers constructivist learning orientations, scaffolding, and interactive reading models. Self-efficacy is framed with reference to Triadic Reciprocal Determinism, a concept outlined by Bandura as part of social cognitive theory (1997). According to Bandura, personal factors, environment and behaviour are reciprocal determinants of each other. This review outlines the relationship between the instructional decisions that must be made by ECTs with regard to reading instruction, their self-efficacy beliefs and the professional learning they receive.

Balanced Reading Instruction in the Primary Classroom

Balanced reading instruction requires careful planning and execution. This section will examine some of the reasons for, and pedagogy behind, the delivery of balanced reading instruction specifically within what is referred to as the Literacy Block. The Literacy Block is an instructional session of approximately ninety minutes during the school day and is divided into a reading workshop/session and a writing workshop/session (Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn, 2010b; Department of Education and Training Australian Capital Territory, 2010). A number of commentators contend that literacy educators have been, and continue to be, 'at war' over the right way to teach reading (Fox,

2005; Patty, 2008; Tomazin, 2008; Devine, 2009; Ferrari, 2008, 2009, 2010), and there are certainly different views about the teaching of reading that range from emphasis on basic skills instruction (Chall, 1996) to the notion of authentic opportunity and whole language approaches (Pearson, 2004). Teachers must take into consideration a number of theories and frameworks which serve as the foundation for balanced reading instruction, which incorporates both views. This paper argues that successful, balanced reading instruction involves: deep understanding of what effective reading is (and isn't!); knowledge of the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, social constructivist theory, and how children best learn the skills they need to use independently; and careful consideration of which literacy skills need to be taught, and when. In sum, this section outlines the 'juggling act' that Early Career Teachers must perform to deliver effective balanced reading instruction.

Balanced reading instruction is not a recent idea in Australia, and the teaching of reading is not limited to either phonics instruction (sometimes called the bottom-up approach) or whole language instruction (sometimes called the top-down model). Interactive models of teaching reading were based on the work of Rumelhart (1977) and Stanovich (1980), and have been used from the late 1980s. Many teachers understand that bottom-up and top-down processes occur simultaneously for the reader to comprehend the meaning of the text. The bottom-up approach stresses reading as a process of decoding and is based on phonics instruction, where students are required to understand the alphabetic principle, know the letters of the alphabet, know their sounds, and be able to sound out words (Gough 1972; Dechant, 1991). Based on this approach, one could read an Indonesian text and would be considered to be 'reading', even if there were no understanding of the text. The 'whole language' approach to teaching reading was used primarily in the 1970s and 1980s and espoused by Goodman (1967) and Smith (1977). This model stresses that the reader receives input from the text, makes predictions (based on conceptual abilities, background knowledge, and language processing skills), and tests and confirms or revises those predictions. Skills are taught in context, with an emphasis on students creating their own knowledge and understandings about reading using authentic texts. Memorisation, a whole-word approach and a focus on the meaning of the word and its overall shape were other strategies taught to students. Advocates of this model stress a holistic approach to reading and writing using children's literature and authentic reading materials. If argued that reading is a meaning-making process, then a balance of whole-language and code-emphasis approaches must be used for instruction.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) acts as a framework for the Literacy Block and reading workshop, and for the instruction of semantic, syntactic and graphophonic skills. The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model is used by literacy teachers to scaffold the learning of their students, and the gradual release of scaffolded instruction leads students to the independent, effective and strategic use of reading concepts, skills and strategies. The notion of scaffolding has its origins in the studies of early language learning (Bruner, 1985, 1990) and in the work of Vygotsky (1978). To begin, the teacher models the reading strategy, taking most of the responsibility for completion of the task. During Shared Reading, the teacher assists students with the task, using prompts and feedback, while still taking a great deal of responsibility for the reading process. In due course, students are expected to take greater responsibility for completion of the reading task. This can happen during Guided Reading, when the teacher works with a small group of students to practise reading skills. Here, the focus of the session is articulated, and students read silently, working on the skill of efficiently integrating a number of skills and strategies. Eventually, the teacher relinquishes responsibility for the task, and the student is expected to demonstrate, perhaps during an independent reading task, a very high degree of control over the reading process, independently using a number of skills and strategies that were previously explicitly modelled by the teacher. This model can be applied to a range of learning situations, such as riding a bike, learning to wash clothes, or greeting strangers

politely, where the gradual withdrawal of instructional scaffolds guides students to effective and successful practice.

Three cueing systems and five 'big ideas' inform the content of the instruction for the reading workshop within the Literacy Block. Effective reading instruction thoughtfully includes these systems and sub-skills within the framework of the Literacy Block and reading workshop. The three cueing systems—graphophonic, semantic and syntactic—are neither sequential nor hierarchical; they are integrated efficiently and simultaneously by effective readers. In order to comprehend fully, readers need command of letter/sound associations and sight vocabulary (graphophonic elements), word order in sentence construction and text structure (syntactic knowledge), and word meanings and knowledge about everyday life (semantic knowledge). Further, integrated, explicit instruction in text comprehension, fluency, phonics, phonemic awareness and vocabulary knowledge has been identified as necessary in effective literacy instruction by the National Reading Panel and others (Adams, 1990; Anderson, 1985; DEST, 2005b; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Rose, 2006). These five 'big ideas' are fundamental, or key, literacy sub-skills (Coyne, 2006) that should be included in daily instruction.

Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theories impact the ECT's choreography of the Literacy Block (Vygotsky, 1978). His emphasis on the social contexts of learning encourage ECTs to do away with worksheets, text books, and published teaching 'systems' and scripts, and become active and involved reading instructors (Cambourne, 2002). Children need to be actively engaged in organising and exploring ideas about reading with the support of an adult to ask questions, and to encourage reflection and metacognitive thinking. They need real, rather than school-based or contrived, experiences in order to develop schema and make connections. Peers are important in assisting the learning process and so learning can't be separated from its social context. Talking with one's peers about the reading goal helps to refine thoughts. The Zone of Proximal Development (the zone in-between the level of performance that students can achieve independently and that which can be achieved with assistance) is another social constructivist idea that influences teachers and researchers to scaffold learning such that students achieve success. Vygotsky's key ideas urge reading teachers to emphasise interaction between learners and to adjust the level of assistance in response to the students' achievements, scaffolding learning to produce independent problem solvers. The social context of learning emphasised in Vygotskys's social constructivist theories presents an enormous challenge for ECTs with regard to organisation, supervision and management of small groups within the Literacy Block.

In this section it is proposed that balanced reading instruction involves sound knowledge of a number of concepts, theories and teaching strategies. Early Career Teachers who understand that effective reading workshops have balanced reading instruction at their core must orchestrate a number of the aspects outlined above in order to offer effective reading instruction. Examining in particular the interactive model of reading, the principles of social constructivist learning, and the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model, evidence here has illustrated the deep understanding of such concepts and careful planning required of ECTs to teach reading. They must guide students to the efficient integration of the cues as well as teach fundamental concepts, while gradually withdrawing instructional scaffolds, and ensuring there is a balance of code-emphasis and whole language approaches. Such orchestration must also take account of social constructivist learning principles in order that the best possible environment for learning is presented. It can be seen that choreographing a successful reading workshop poses a challenge for many ECTs.

Self-Efficacy and the Early Career Teacher

Among the mechanisms of agency, none is more central or pervasive than beliefs of personal efficacy. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act. Efficacy belief therefore is a major basis of action. (Bandura, 1997, p. 3)

Hoy (2000, para. 1) suggests that teacher efficacy is " . . . teachers' confidence in their ability to promote students' learning". It has also been defined as " . . . the teacher's belief in his or her capability to organise and execute courses of action required to accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context" (Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk, & Hoy, 1998, p. 233). In the context of the primary ECT's reading classroom, it is a belief in one's capability to produce certain learning and teaching outcomes related to reading instruction and attributing that belief to the possession of the required teaching skills, rather than to the abilities of the students, or to the worth of resources, or even to luck.

Most investigations, discussions and conceptions of teacher efficacy are based on the theoretical framework developed by Albert Bandura (1977), a psychologist known for his work on social learning theory and self-efficacy. Ashton (1985) and Ashton, Olejnik, Crocker and McAuliffe (1982, as cited in Poulou, 2007) were some of the first to discuss teacher efficacy as an extension of Bandura's reasoning. Anita Woolfolk Hoy, an educational psychologist, is another key researcher of this concept whose work in recent studies has focused on the sources of teacher efficacy.

Levels of self-efficacy certainly have the potential to have wide-ranging practical and emotional implications for ECTs. Themes and issues of past research centring on teacher efficacy have concentrated on the validation of instruments which measure efficacy expectations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001). Other key research has investigated the effects and/or correlation of teacher efficacy and student achievement (Anderson et al., 1988; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Rose & Medway, 1981); instructional innovation (Guskey, 1988); stress levels (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Hoy 2000); teacher commitment (Coladerci, 1992); school context (Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993); special education referrals by teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy (Allinder, 1994; Soodak & Podell, 1993); and performance satisfaction (Hoy, 2000).

According to Bandura (1986; 1997), perceptions of efficacy are based on four sources: enactive attainment, vicarious experience, physiological and emotional states, and verbal persuasion. The factors affecting personal teaching efficacy for reading instruction can be closely related to these four sources.

The *enactive attainment* source is based on authentic mastery experiences. Mastery experiences are posited as the most influential source of efficacy expectations (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy beliefs are raised after success and lowered after repeated failures, especially those that occur early on, such as during the first few months of an ECT's career. According to this theory, ECTs who rate their teaching performance during reading instruction as high after a successful session of reading instruction will have raised levels of efficacy beliefs. On the other hand, a perception of poor performance would lower efficacy beliefs (Poulou, 2007).

Vicarious—or modelled—experiences also impact upon stronger or weaker self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). This is important with regard to Early Career Teachers, whose efficacy expectations may decrease if the teaching model of reading instruction they observe during pre-service training, school-based mentoring, or in-service professional development activities, performs poorly. This is especially so if the teacher model is someone with whom the ECT strongly identifies in terms of teaching style, personality, age or gender: "I am like that teacher. S/he has difficulty implementing Guided Reading. I probably will, too." ECTs must have excellent models for reading instruction in order to challenge poor, or faulty, perceptions or to maintain those that are positive.

Physiological and emotional states – sometimes referred to as physical readiness or physiological arousal – are another source of teacher efficacy (Bandura, 1997). The relationship between self-efficacy, emotional support and competence is strong. Context and

its effect on emotional well-being, has a profound effect on efficacy and has been the subject of recent studies (for example, see Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). For ECTs, feelings of tension or anxiety during the Literacy Block might be interpreted by them as an indication of poor ability in the area of reading instruction.

The final source of teacher efficacy is *verbal and social persuasion*. Someone perceived to be a trustworthy, credible expert might temporarily lift efficacy expectation through verbal persuasion. Like vicarious experience, the effect of verbal persuasion is dependent upon how the persuader is perceived. This source also relates to mentor and colleague feedback as well as general staffroom chat, more focused talks, some aspects of professional development workshops (where participants are persuaded that they have the skills to master given tasks (Bandura, 1997)), the general school setting and other aspects of teaching and learning such as parental support and availability of resources (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2002). Lack of feedback, or feedback offered within misinformed beliefs and poor teaching experiences of reading can result in lower efficacy expectation, especially if framed within an unsupportive environment.

Thus far, this review has painted a broad picture of sources of efficacy expectation for beginning teachers of reading. It is not difficult to imagine an ECT practicing within a 'source vacuum' as he or she attempts to grapple with the methodologies and strategies necessary for a successful reading program; that is, implementing reading programs with limited experience and unsuccessful outcomes, without access to models with which they can identify, without feedback or focussed professional learning, and in an emotional and physical state which reflects the stresses and anxieties of the first year of teaching.

The effect of efficacy expectation on ECTs' choice of methodologies and teaching strategies for their reading classroom, as well as their search for more information to support their teaching of reading, cannot be underestimated. A lowered sense of personal teaching efficacy can have a negative effect on an Early Career Teacher's choice of methodologies (Cousins & Walker, 2000) and their students' achievement (Denham & Michael, 1981). An ECT may agree that a balanced reading program will produce successful readers but s/he may have doubts about her/his ability to use the necessary skills to achieve this outcome. Efficacy expectation has implications for the activities chosen by beginning teachers (Allinder, 1994; Guskey, 1988) and their professional commitment to attain specific teaching and student outcomes (Coladarci, 1992). Novice teachers may be cognisant of best practice strategies, pedagogies and assessment in the area of reading instruction, but a lowered sense of efficacy may result in being unable to identify what is missing from the essential components of their strategic repertoire.

In short, a negative sense of self-efficacy has an impact on the 'desired results' of good reading instruction, being: student achievement. Wyse and Styles (2007) concluded that if lowered efficacy beliefs develop, beginning teachers may be more likely to rely on pedagogy and strategies based on poor research or on pre-prepared, 'teacher proof' resources and frameworks. Reading instruction 'performance' based on the use of materials such as these may conceivably be considered less than effective by the Early Career Teacher, in terms of possible negative reception by the students, feelings of dissatisfaction by the teacher and poor achievement in comprehension. And poor teaching performance and student outcomes and attitude can lead to the further lowering of self-efficacy beliefs.

Once established, efficacy beliefs are resistant to change. Poulou (2007) suggests that, because teacher efficacy is 'malleable' early on in learning, support during the ECTs' first few years is critical to a positive change in teachers' sense of efficacy. Hoy's research suggests that efficacy rises during teacher preparation and then falls with initial experience, and she asserts that support at this time preserves efficacy during the early years. Therefore, professional learning undertaken at the beginning of a teaching career, especially in the area of reading instruction, is vital (Hoy, 2000).

Methodology

This was a qualitative research project. Data was acquired through literature and from interviews with four Early Career Teachers from three different schools in the Woden/Weston area of the Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn. The participants were the only ECTs in this particular area. All were in their first or second year of teaching, and aged between 21 and 24 years of age. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews in order to elicit a rich picture of the perspectives held by these practitioners. "Member checking" was used as a technique to ensure that the findings correctly reported the experiences as outlined by the interviewees, with transcripts being returned to participants for scrutiny in this regard (Mutch, 2005, p. 114).

Data analysis for this research was an emergent process. The interview questions provided the framework for data analysis and the coding of responses and so some coding categories were able to be constructed prior to thematic analysis.

The research design was sharply focussed on two theoretical frameworks: the concept of self-efficacy, and balanced reading instruction. Interview questions were developed to elicit specific responses about self-efficacy and elements of reading instruction. This specificity did not preclude participants from providing rich responses and other perspectives of their first year/s of teaching reading. The researcher looked at a few examples in some depth, each case being context-specific.

Results and Discussion
The 'Ideal' Reading Lesson: Routines, Role Models and Visions

The Early Career Teachers who were interviewed were initially asked to describe some of the routines that are put in place for reading lessons. In general, the routines outlined by the interviewees suggested a specific time within the literacy session set aside just for reading instruction on most days of the week. While some participants did not mention specific instructional activities, or routines, an overall picture of the reading workshop, as detailed by the interviewees, included modelled and shared reading, menu boards to direct students to activities, reading and other literacy activities, and time to read with the teacher (Guided Reading). All ECTs stated that their literacy session included rotations, and two of them mentioned that students worked in ability groups. All participants stated that reading workshops included the assistance of the Learning Support Teacher, or the Learning Support Team.

Teacher A: *Our Literacy Support people come in—that's part of the routine—and they work with . . . the guided reading group.*

Teacher C: *I work with one group and it's generally the group that's reading unless I have a Learning Support Teacher, then I put them with the reading group and I wander around the others.*

It is interesting—and somewhat alarming—that teachers appear to be releasing responsibility for small group instruction, where explicit strategies are practised to the perceived 'expert'—the Learning or Literacy Support person. This suggests that some ECTs may not feel confident about their abilities in two areas: curriculum differentiation, and guided reading instruction. Further evidence to support this notion can be found in Table 1; *instruction of comprehension skills* and *support of students experiencing difficulty* are not areas identified by the majority of the group as those for which they believe they have high levels of self-efficacy. Some might argue that the above-mentioned areas are key in terms of effective guided reading instruction (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). These occasions (when the Literacy Support Teacher is present in the

classroom) would be perfect opportunities for Early Career Teachers to demonstrate successful mastery experiences, which, combined with verbal persuasion from a trusted and well-liked Support Teacher, could heighten their self-efficacy beliefs for reading instruction.

Interviewees were then asked to identify a colleague or other role model whose practice inspired the interviewee with regard to the teaching of reading. Most of the schools in which the ECTs were situated have a variety of good practice models (i.e. teaching colleagues) for novice teachers to observe and emulate. Three ECTs stated that a year level colleague had acted as a role model for good practice in the teaching of reading. In one case, this was also the Early Career Teacher's mentor. The other role models mentioned included the Learning Support Teacher, an outside literacy expert, another experienced teacher in the school and a passionate University lecturer.

Finally, the ECTs were asked to share their vision of the ideal reading lesson or workshop. In considering the ideal reading lesson, the musings of three of the participants moved beyond the five aspects of reading instruction outlined in the interview; they began to consider other areas of pedagogy. Teacher A's vision of the ideal reading lesson included the use of a two-week block in which there would be ample time for the teacher to model reading strategies and for students to apply these strategies through student-directed activities. Teacher A's idea here speaks to what might be considered a 'strategy-driven' focus for reading instruction.

Teacher A: *I've envisioned a two-week block where you spend the first week getting into it . . . and then as that two-week block ends, my control becomes less and less as their control goes up. So then they're actually applying [the reading strategy].*

Teachers B and C both expressed a desire for more time to engage with students individually, greater ability to discern the differences and needs of individual children and to model strategies specifically for their needs, as well as an ability to more successfully engage students during reading workshops.

Teacher C: *And having a better understanding, for me, of individual kids . . . even though they're in groups, I still struggle with the difference between those groups. And the five kids sitting in front of you are so different.*

For Which Specific Areas of Reading Instruction do Early Career Teachers Have High Levels of Self-Efficacy?

The ECT interviewees were provided with a definition of self-efficacy, in order to separate it from the idea of 'confidence', and they were also provided with an example: *"…with regard to writing instruction, one may have developed a high level of self-efficacy for teaching students to create and use rubrics to self-assess their own writing, but one may have a low level of self-efficacy for using Web 2 technology to create a class blog"*. Early Career Teachers were then asked to nominate those areas of reading instruction for which they believe they'd developed highest levels of self-efficacy. The areas in which the researcher was most interested were: instruction of decoding strategies; instruction of comprehension strategies; establishment of routines and activities to support students' learning during the literacy block; assessment of reading—using running records as well as other types of instruments to determine students' abilities and areas for further development; and support of students who are experiencing difficulty learning to read.

Instruction of decoding skills was most often nominated by the Early Career Teachers as an area in which they had the highest level of self-efficacy. *Establishment of routines and activities* was mentioned by two teachers as an aspect of reading instruction for which they had high levels of self-efficacy. All other areas were nominated just once, suggesting that such areas are, for this group of teachers overall, aspects of reading instruction for which they

have low levels of self-efficacy, together with those areas of reading instruction *not* nominated (see Table 1).

HIGHEST LEVELS OF PERCEIVED SELF-EFFICACY					
AREA OF READING INSTRUCTION	TEACHER A	TEACHER B	TEACHER C	TEACHER D	TOTAL NOMI NATIO NS
Instruction of decoding skills	✓	✓	✓		3
Support of students experiencing difficulty	✓				1
Instruction of comprehension strategies			✓		1
Assessment of Reading		✓			1
Establishment of Routines and Activities		✓		✓	2

Table 1: Highest Levels of Perceived Self-Efficacy

What Types of Professional Development do ECTs Believe Have Increased Their Self-Efficacy for Specific Areas of Reading Instruction?

For each area of reading instruction for which ECTs identified high levels of self-efficacy, they were then asked to describe which professional development opportunities or support—at school and outside of school—had increased their belief in their personal competence to teach the identified element of reading? ECTs were also asked to identify what was specifically most helpful about the professional learning (e.g. Presenters? Activities? Interaction with colleagues?) With the benefit of hindsight, ECTs were finally asked about which professional development opportunities or support they would have preferred. The types of professional learning opportunities which Early Career Teachers identified as having increased their self-efficacy for reading instruction included: internal—or 'in-house'—professional development; discussion with colleagues/informal professional development; collaborative interaction with colleagues; observation of colleagues; collaborating with Learning Support Team; support from mentor; staff meetings led by a Learning Support Teacher; external experts coming in to school to work with individual teachers and to lead staff meetings; and demonstration of skills by Learning Support Teacher or a colleague. If these suggested opportunities are sorted according to Bandura's proposed sources of self-efficacy (1986, 1997), the majority fall into the *vicarious experience* category (see Table 2).

Participants were then asked: *In hindsight, what professional development opportunities/support would you like to have been offered?* Desirable professional development opportunities identified by the participants included: professional development activities that address specific needs (individual) in a more formal, internal setting; observation of others; and professional development activities that teach/demonstrate the skills that Learning Support Teachers (the perceived 'experts') have. Again, these responses, when sorted according to the four antecedents of self-efficacy, are heavily weighted toward

vicarious experience, while mastery experiences (or any events that could be considered as mastery experiences) were not mentioned (see Table 2).

Enactive attainment (mastery experience) was not represented as a source of professional learning which had a positive effect on the ECTs' self-efficacy. This is not surprising given that Early Career Teachers have only been teaching for a year or two and mastery experiences upon which to draw would be limited. Furthermore, this particular group of teachers appeared to have little understanding of mastery experience—and reflection and self-assessment—as a valuable form of professional development, perhaps because most of their professional learning has been formal in nature and delivered by another 'expert' or colleague. Practically, mastery attainment for Early Career Teachers cannot occur successfully without some cognitive processing (Bandura, 1997), or some analysis and reflection upon this source. The observation and assistance of a mentor or coach, who would also be a source of verbal persuasion, could be valuable here.

Proposed sources of self-efficacy	Professional learning (PL) identified as having increased self-efficacy for reading	Desirable professional learning (PL) for reading instruction.
Enactive Attainment	_	_
Vicarious Experience	• Observation of colleague/Learning Support Teacher • Collaborating with Learning Support Team (including observation) • Demonstration by Learning/Literacy Support Teacher/colleague • Staff meeting led by Learning/ Literacy Support Teacher (modelling) • External experts (critical friend) leading staff meeting • External experts (critical friend) working with individual teachers	• PL that addresses specific needs in a more formal setting (as opposed to informal discussion) • Observation • PL that provides skills acquired by Learning Support Teacher • External PL that provides opportunities for reflection on practices used in reading instruction • PL that addresses specific needs within the classroom
Physiological and Emotional States	• In-house PD (supportive environment) • Collaborative interaction with colleagues	_
Verbal and Social Persuasion	• Discussion with colleagues • Support from mentor • In-house PD (verbal persuasion)	_

Table 2: Factors Affecting Self-Efficacy for Reading Instruction

Observation of others was a form of professional learning nominated by two teachers as desirable. This particular form of vicarious experience had clearly been most positive for them. The model they observed was one with which they probably identified in terms of gender or teaching style—an important factor for successful vicarious experience sources (Bandura, 1997). Two teachers did not explicitly mention their participation in any observation lessons.

Teacher A: *When I started work last year, I came out of uni. . . I found when you're actually in the classroom and you're actually expected to break up your morning into a literacy block, I didn't actually feel prepared. I still felt a bit like: This is what you have to do and . . . Am I doing it right? Am I doing what everybody else is doing? Maybe some peer . . . Going and having a look in the classrooms of your peers just to reassure you that you are doing it right would be good . . . Then [the Literacy Support Teacher] came in and [modelled] the Reciprocal Teaching lesson. And it just hit me that that's what I should have . . . I felt I should have been doing that at the beginning of this year.*

Teacher B: *So, coming to this school and working with [an outside expert] as well— that's been great—and just being able to observe how other people conduct their literacy groups. [An experienced colleague] also has been really good . . . I often observed her literacy blocks and she gave me lots of good ideas.*

Opportunities That Could be Offered to ECTs to Heighten Their Levels of Self-Efficacy for Reading Instruction: Recommendations

This small-scale research project allows for some tentative recommendations to be made: the provision of small-scale, geographically-based, ECT networks; more organised opportunities for observations and collaboration; and created opportunities for mastery experiences, supported by a literacy coach.

The Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn Catholic Education Office provides three centrally-organised induction days to ECTs to establish networks, together with funding to schools for their professional development. It is assumed that mentoring and the professional development program will generally occur for each Early Career Teacher within the school community. However, based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests that ECTs be grouped into Early Career Teacher Teams for easier collaboration. Teacher D spoke of the feeling of intimidation at external professional learning activities:

Yeah, I do like the in-school [professional learning]. Just in your own safety net and you feel very comfortable. If you're going out elsewhere, it's sort of out of your safety zone, and you might feel a little intimidated by the mass of teachers that are there. And every second person knows each other and you're just sort of sitting there, a first year, going: "Well . . . Ok . . . ." So it can be a little bit overwhelming.

A sense of belonging and collegiality help to shape a supportive, safe and non-judgemental environment, argued by Clift, Allard, Quinlan and Chubbuk (2001) as vital for novice teachers, and Early Career Teacher Teams would serve as two sources of heightened self-efficacy: verbal and social persuasion, and physiological and emotional states.

This recommendation is in line with the results of the study of McCormack, Gore and Thomas (2006). An important finding of their research was the challenge for beginning teachers in developing a professional identity, with feedback and confirmation of this value identified as important in the development of self-efficacy. McCormack, Gore and Thomas also highlight the current shift from a deficit model of teacher training to self-directed professional growth, and conclude that traditional induction programs are useful but informal, collaborative learning was considered of most value by these teachers.

If collaborative learning within an educational site or system could occur in the form of both modelling *and* observation, it could be a strong source of teacher efficacy for beginning teachers of reading (McCormack, Gore, & Thomas, 2006). Using funding for release days, small Early Career Teacher Teams, created based on proximity of their associated educational sites, could work with a single mentor for reflection and discussion. Observation of best practice of reading instruction could be organised to take place in the Early Career Teachers' schools. Organisation of such observation would be easier in terms of distance, time away from school and coordinating release with literacy session times at other schools.

Professional learning could be tailored to these needs of the Early Career Teachers in the team, and delivered by experienced colleagues or a Learning/Literacy Support Teacher whose assistance was acknowledged in interviews as a factor in increasing the self-efficacy of some Early Career Teachers for reading instruction. Indeed, Learning/Literacy Support Teachers could play a greater role in the induction process, whereby they could be available to ECTs to observe, model and discuss relevant aspects of reading instruction.

Professional learning as an environmental factor affects, and is affected by, ECTs' self-efficacy (personal factor) and their choice of teaching approaches in the reading classroom (behaviour) (Bandura, 2001). Professional learning is effective when it addresses the classroom challenges and is context-specific (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001) and teachers are more likely to attempt new strategies that have been modelled for them (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007). Targeting the benefits of using technology to enhance the professional learning of ECTs in the area of reading instruction, requires further research, especially when we consider teacher isolation and the difficulties ECTs have organising and then finding time to observe other expert teachers of reading. Web2.0 technologies can offer an important form of social interaction and networking for ECTs; social networking sites afford access to expertise and allow for reflection, experimentation with and articulation of different instructional decisions, as well as the development of conceptual and pedagogical thinking (Luehmann & Tinelli, 2008; Aubusson, Schuck, & Burden, 2009). This type of technological intervention might allow ECTs to view good models and explanations of practice (vicarious experience) upon which to base their professional decisions within the Literacy Block, and a place to record their reflections on their own experiences.

Finally, as enactive attainment is considered the antecedent for self-efficacy with the most potency (Bandura, 1997), it is suggested that opportunities be created for Early Career Teachers to achieve mastery experiences using an experienced teacher of literacy as a coach. This coach could be an external expert or critical friend, used to serve the entire Early Career Teacher team, or schools could make use of the existing expertise within their staff. While there has been substantial research into the coaching or mentoring model of professional learning (e.g. Blachowicz, Obrochta, & Fogelberg, 2005; Schwartz & McCarthy, 2003; Lyons & Pinnell, 2001) Darling-Hammond and Richardson 2009) suggest that the causal link between coaching or mentoring and student achievement has not been sufficiently established. Indeed, this research did not seek to demonstrate this relationship, other than an inferred positive consequence of increased self-efficacy. However, teachers who receive school-based coaching demonstrate the ability to choose and apply more appropriate teaching approaches in the classroom (Kohler, Crilley, Shearer, & Good, 1997). The value of follow-up coaching should not be ignored (Cantrell & Hughes, 2008).

Teachers' self-efficacy is " . . .a little idea with big impact" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007, p.54). By measuring and conceptualising beginning teachers' self-efficacy *for reading instruction*, a new perspective on the area of teacher efficacy can be considered. Research such as this may provide a better understanding of the constraints and supports to those perceptions of self-efficacy for reading instruction held by Early Career Teachers, and could also serve as a basis for schools to work in situ with novice teachers to offer the most effective professional learning and mentoring opportunities suited to their needs.

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