Narrative Inquiry: Examining the Self-Efficacy of Content Area Teacher Candidates

Tiffany Karalis Noel[1]

Abstract
This study examined the factors attributed to 10 teacher candidates' perceptions of self-efficacy throughout their student teaching experiences. Dissimilar to the majority of studies which assess teacher self-efficacy quantitatively, this study used narrative inquiry to meet three aims: First, to understand the variables attributed to teacher self-efficacy among a group of secondary content area teacher candidates; second, to examine candidates' student teaching experiences; and third, to inform teacher educators regarding recurrent themes of teacher preparation which may influence the self-efficacy of teacher candidates. The study's findings provide insight for teacher educators to consider strategies for enhancing teacher preparation including, but not limited to 1) increased opportunities for preservice teachers to apply pedagogy; 2) the implementation of classroom management strategy coursework into teacher education curricula; and 3) incorporated opportunities to explore the extensive demands of the teaching profession, ranging from time management to dealing with difficult parents. This study proposes that teacher preparation can influence content area teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs, and creates a paradigm for future qualitative studies exploring the relationship between teacher preparation and teacher self-efficacy.

Key Words: Preservice teacher education, teacher self-efficacy, teacher preparation, teacher candidates, student teaching

Introduction

A majority of research into self-efficacy and teacher preparation uses quantitative methods (see Chan, 2008; Chen et al., 2014; Hoy & Spero, 2005; Schunk, 1991; Soodak & Podell, 1997; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). As novice teachers continue to experience lower levels of self-efficacy (see Ingersoll et al., 2014; Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011), it is critical to continue researching the relationship between teacher preparation and teacher candidates' self-efficacy. Furthermore, higher levels of teacher self-efficacy are correlated with a commitment to remaining in the profession (Coladarci, 1992), increased job satisfaction (Caprara, et. al., 2003), and decreased teacher burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). As such, a narrative inquiry in teacher education addresses the gap between qualitative research and teacher self-efficacy and illuminates the ongoing significance of this issue and its relationship to teacher preparation.

The research questions explored in this study are 1) What stories do content area teacher candidates tell about their first teaching experiences? 2) To what extent

[1] Department of Learning and Instruction, University at Buffalo, USA. Email: tbkarali@buffalo.edu, ORCID ID: 0000-0003-1989-1643

does teacher preparation affect the self-efficacy of content area teacher candidates? 3) Which recurrent themes of teacher preparation affect the self-efficacy of teacher candidates, regardless of content area?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the notion that teacher preparation and teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs are linked. This study aims to illuminate this correlation and inform teacher educators about how to improve teacher preparation and, accordingly, bolster teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs.

Self-efficacy is theoretically founded in psychologist Albert Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986) which suggests that all learned meaning and understanding is based on social interactions and observations. The theory asserts that learning through observation and interaction with others is especially productive because as people observe the rewards and consequences of certain behaviors, they may choose to replicate (or reverse) the modeled behaviors in order to achieve their own idea of a desired result (Bandura, 1986). For instance, in the context of a classroom, if a student observes that the completion of an assignment is rewarded with praise from the teacher, they may choose to replicate the assignment completion if they view the outcome as a desirable interaction. Bandura (1982a; 1982b) stated, "perceived self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of how well one can execute courses of action required to deal with prospective situations" (p. 122). He asserted that while an individual can possess high self-efficacy in a certain domain of their practice, they can just as easily possess low efficacy beliefs in an alternative domain (Bandura, 1982). Therefore, a teacher who possesses high self-efficacy in the domain of building rapport with students may just as easily possess a low sense of self-efficacy in the domain of employing effective classroom management strategies.

In considering the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher preparation, Bandura (1993) suggested that for high levels of self-efficacy to transpire, feelings of confidence and gratification must be developed early in the adoption of a skill set. Furthermore, adequate care and attention must be taken to ensure pre-service teachers' (PSTs) successes when placed in authentic teaching contexts, as those experiences will influence future self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1997). Accordingly, Redmon (2007) stated, "candidates who develop strong feelings of teacher efficacy early in their pre-service professional education are better prepared to retain those feelings and the advantages they bring through the inevitable set-backs and failures that beset most all beginning teachers" (p. 12). Therefore, a primary goal of teacher preparation programs should be to develop those encouraging feelings of efficacy, while tempering those feelings with the realities of classroom teaching (Redmon, 2007).

Literature Review

Bandura (1993) suggested that the choices teachers make in their classrooms is regulated by the perceptions teachers have of themselves as individuals and their pedagogical abilities. Accordingly, a teacher's self-efficacy is influenced by internal and external factors such as emotional exhaustion and classroom context, respectively (Guskey & Passaro, 1994; Ross, 1994). Therefore, teacher self-efficacy is context-specific and impacted by environment, as well as correlated with the amount of stress experienced at preservice, novice, and experienced levels of teaching (Bandura, 1997; Schwarzer & Hallum, 2008; Von der Embse et al., 2016).

Self-efficacy and teacher preparation

Hoy and Spero (2005) asserted "some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during student teaching and the induction year" (p. 343). According to Ball and Forzani (2009), many teacher education programs focus on theoretical knowledge and belief systems without emphasizing the importance of application and practice. They suggested that a "practice-focused curriculum" would focus on the content knowledge demands of the profession, as well as the practical application of the transference of learning (Ball and Forzani, 2009, p. 503). In a study conducted among 90 beginning teachers, Poulou (2003) discovered "Teacher training was an important source of teaching efficacy" (p.1). Poulou's findings were further supported by Yeung and Watkins' (2000), who discovered that opportunities for instructional practice experiences were largely influential on emerging teachers' self-efficacy (Poulou, 2003). Comprehensive teacher preparation would allow beginning teachers to develop their instructional approaches before entering the field, which, in turn, may positively impact their sense of efficacy (McLaurin et. al., 2009).

Hoy and Spero (2005) suggested that an individual's initial teaching experiences are vital components in the long-term development of teacher efficacy. For instance, teacher self-efficacy may influence and be influenced by aspects of the profession such as instructional quality, classroom management, and teacher burnout (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Holzberger et al., 2013; Martin et al., 2012). As discovered by Brouwers & Tomic (2000), the relationship between teacher efficacy and classroom management is cyclical; that is, teacher efficacy influences classroom management, which in turn influences teacher efficacy. Therefore, if PSTs feel prepared to employ effective classroom management techniques during student teaching, for example, they are more likely to experience high levels of self-efficacy (Holzberger et al., 2013).

According to Chen, Paquette, and Rieg (2007), teacher education programs do not prepare PSTs to effectively manage the major stressors that occur during the early teaching years. Darling-Hammond's (2003) professional development model suggest-

ed that providing emerging teachers with a thorough introduction to the job's expectations, along with positive support and mentorship from colleagues and administrators, would help them navigate the challenges of first-year teaching and bolster their willingness to remain in the profession (McLaurin et. al., 2009). Building on this, Hoy & Woolfolk (1990) suggested that school settings have a powerful impact on teacher efficacy, and thus it is important for teachers to have a strong support system when undergoing the inevitable challenges and setbacks associated with their early teaching experiences. Contrary to the popular belief that teachers leave the field due to low compensation rates, researchers assert that cynical colleagues and administrators who refuse to acknowledge or support teachers working in negative conditions—e.g., 'lack of supplies or a chaotic school environment'—are leading factors in stripping teachers of their self-efficacy (Johnson et al., 2005).

In order to promote the development of self-efficacy among emerging teachers, Redmon (2007) suggested that early experiences often set the tone for novice teachers' efficacy beliefs:

It seems that teacher preparation programs should be designed in such a way that the "teachers in training" develop strong feelings of teacher self-efficacy and maintain these feelings throughout their preparation program and into their first teaching assignment. (p. 5)

Pendergast, Garvis, and Keogh (2011) found that among a survey of 279 PSTs who did not have any prior practical teaching experience, levels of self-efficacy were overestimated. However, during the final semester of their teacher preparation (i.e. the student teaching semester), the same PSTs rated themselves with lower levels of efficacy (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011). As stated in their discussion,

The decline in teacher self-efficacy in this study suggests that some of the participating teachers may have over-estimated their initial levels of self-efficacy. In teacher education, common wisdom would suggest the first reality shock would occur when entering the classroom during the practical period (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011, p. 56). If PSTs were provided with increased opportunities for practical teaching opportunities throughout their teacher preparation, perhaps the risk of "reality shock" would not be so prominent throughout their student teaching experiences (Pendergast, Garvis, & Keogh, 2011, p. 56).

Narrative inquiry and student teaching

When used as a process for understanding the contextualized situations in which teachers come to know what they know and make the decisions that they do, narrative inquiry provides pre-service teachers the opportunity to reflect upon their prior constructions and beliefs of what it means to be a teacher before entering the classroom (Rushton, 2004). Aligned with this notion, Yuan and Lee (2016) argued that inadequate attention has been paid to the way PSTs construct their identities throughout student

teaching. Using narrative inquiry, Yuan and Lee (2016) analyzed the emotions of one participant, Ming, finding that both positive and negative emotions unearthed through narratives contributed to Ming's self-belief as a student-teacher. They also emphasized that PSTs are highly susceptible to positive and negative emotions during the process of learning to teach, and these emotions "can influence their interpretation of various learning experiences, the growth of teacher knowledge and reflective abilities, and the process through which they make sense of themselves in the teaching profession" (Yuan & Lee, 2016, p. 819). As a result, the researchers accentuated the need for additional studies to "explore the transition from the pre-service to in-service context, with a focus on the emotions new teachers might experience and how these emotions relate to their learning and identity formation in the real teaching context" (Yuan & Lee, 2016, p. 838).

Knight (2009) defended using narrative inquiry with teacher candidates to help them chronicle the events in their lives, such as the student teaching experience. She asserted that when students are in the process of deciding which events to discuss, "they have already placed a certain amount of significance on that story. However, increased significance is revealed when they also engage in reflective writing" (Knight, 2009, p. 49). Knight (2009) supported the notion that stories become narratives for preservice and student teachers when they "re-examine and interrogate their stories to discover how personal experience shapes their beliefs and assumptions about students, teaching, and learning and thus impacts their classroom practices" (p. 49).

Rushton (2004) used narrative inquiry to share the stories of one participant, Julie, and the ongoing challenges she faced throughout her student teaching experience. Findings collected from a series of interviews during her student teaching semester indicated "the university had not taken proper care of her" (Rushton, 2004, p. 73). Additionally, Julie provided a specific assessment of the areas she felt were adequately addressed throughout her teacher preparation:

She expressed frustration at the university for not training her in techniques of classroom discipline, stating "pretty much all the inner-city interns that I have talked to feel that [the university] did not prepare us whatsoever about working in the inner-city schools" (Rushton, 2004, p. 73).

Ingersoll et al. (2014) argued that beginning teachers must feel prepared and know how to teach in order to deem themselves qualified to educate or, in other terms, possess a belief in their ability to teach effectively. While the common misconception that knowledge of one's content is the most important element of determining a teacher's effectiveness in the classroom persists, research proves that instructional competence often outweighs content knowledge in establishing teacher self-efficacy (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Accordingly, researchers argued that the conduction of empirical research to assess the value of different teacher education programs "has never been so imperative" for helping predict the self-efficacy beliefs of beginning teachers (Ingersoll et al.,

2014, p. 3).

Methodology

Data acquired through narrative research is generally open to interpretation which "develops through collaboration of researcher and respondent or story teller and listener" (Joyce, 2015, p. 40). Since its first introduction, researchers used narrative inquiry as a method for understanding personal human perspectives in an effort to build larger frames of reference to assess assumptions and guide action (Gill, 2001). Clandinin and Connelly, the first researchers to use narrative inquiry, strove to present the realities of everyday teacher experiences and amplify "voices that may have otherwise remained silent" (Wang & Geale, 2015, p. 195). For researchers interested in studying "humans, experience, and recognizing the power in understanding the particular and broader conceptions of knowing," narrative inquiry moves "away from a position of objectivity defined from the positivistic, realist perspective toward a research perspective focused on interpretation and the understanding of meaning" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 9).

Data collection

This study used individual written reflections and semi-structured interviews to collect data. Although many reliable and validated quantitative methods exist to measure self-efficacy, the opportunity to write and verbally discuss their preparation and student teaching experiences provided participants an opportunity to explain thoughtfully the factors that may have influenced their efficacy beliefs, and favorable versus unfavorable attitudes towards teaching. Matoti, Junqueira, and Odora (2013) stated, "It is during teaching practice that students develop a positive or negative attitude towards teaching as a career," which can elicit low or high teacher efficacy, such as feelings of inadequacy or an increased awareness of the profession, respectively (pp. 635-636). Given the deeply emotional nature of an individual's confidence and self-esteem, a qualitative approach to data collection provided the researcher and participants profound insights into the factors that often plague emerging teachers.

Participant selection

There were three criteria for selecting participants for this study: (a) at least 18 years old; (b) completed a literacy methods course; (c) assigned to a student teaching position during the spring 2018 academic semester. To identify participants who met the criteria, the researcher contacted students she previously instructed in a literacy methods course at a large R1 institution. Because the researcher previously instructed the participants, an initial foundation of rapport was established, which fostered a trustworthy and comfortable environment for participants to share their stories and reflections. The 10 participants' pseudonyms, demographics, school contexts, and content areas are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1.
Participants' Demographic Profiles

Participant Pseudonym	Participant Race	Participant Sex	School Setting	Level Taught	Participant Content-Area
John	White	Male	Suburban	Middle School	English Language Arts
Elle	White	Female	Suburban	High School	English Language Arts
Jade	White	Female	Rural	High School	English Language Arts
Leigh	White	Female	Suburban	High School	English Language Arts
Grant	White	Male	Suburban	High School	Social Studies
Paul	White	Male	Urban	High School	Social Studies
Kate	White	Female	Urban	High School	Social Studies
Nick	White	Male	Urban	High School	Technology
Luke	White	Male	Suburban	High School	Economics
Will	White	Male	Rural	High School	Biology

Trustworthiness and ethical considerations

Given the intimate relationships that often develop between researchers and participants in narrative research, ethical considerations including dignity, privacy, and participants' well-being were highly important to the study (Wang & Geale, 2015). The pre-established foundation of trust between the researcher and participants was maintained throughout data collection and analysis. During analysis, the researcher focused on participants' inner voices and strove to honor their stories in her interpretations. By checking in with participants to confirm that interpretations were accurately reflected, the researcher was faithful to the facts and developed narratives into valid and credible stories (Moen, 2006).

Data collection procedures

According to Bell (2002), while stories are common to every type of society, the underlying messages and implications of each story differ widely; therefore, it is imperative to recognize the patterns reflected in stories that are available to us if we hope to inspire and initiate change. Kvale (1996) stated, "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, and to uncover their lived world…the qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge" (p. 1). Therefore, through analyzing

and retelling teacher candidates' written reflections and semi-structured interview transcripts, rich, emotion-laded stories were unearthed.

Written reflections

16 written reflections were collected from each of the 10 participants over the 16-week spring 2018 semester. Although guiding reflection questions were submitted to each participant (Appendix A), participants were encouraged to write freely. It was important for teacher candidates to reflect upon their own sense of effectiveness by recalling and analyzing specific events and outcomes.

Semi-structured interviews

Participants engaged in at least two interviews, one at the beginning and end of the 16-week semester. However, the four English Language Arts (ELA) teacher candidates also participated in a third interview during the middle of the 16-week semester. The interviews were exploratory and used open and semi-structured questions (Appendix B). The researcher fostered a relaxed and welcoming environment for participants to share their stories, using narrative inquiry as an intimate and personal way to carefully assess meanings related to self-efficacy beliefs (Clandinin, 2007).

Coding: Creating 10 domains and identifying emergent themes

To organize data, the researcher created 10 domains which served as categories for the main questions asked in administered reflection prompts and during interviews (see Appendices A & B). The second step of the researcher's coding process involved pulling quotes that fit into the aforementioned domains and highlighting major themes that emerged. The researcher used pattern coding, or coding that identifies "explanatory or inferential codes…that identify an emergent theme, configuration or explanation" in order to reduce the large amount of data into related themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 69). The coding process was inductive, as this study used research questions to narrow the scope of the study; after organizing the data (in quote form) across the 10 aforementioned domains, themes that provided insight into teacher candidates' perceptions of self-efficacy emerged. Through the analysis of emergent themes, the researcher discovered connections between participants' perceptions of self-efficacy and their teacher preparation experiences, which were then used to construct participants' narratives.

Constructing participants' narratives

The researcher highlighted each participant's timeline, revealing how their efficacy beliefs either stayed the same, improved, or decreased over the course of the semester. The 10 domains allowed the researcher to construct these timelines more easily, as she could refer to the domain of "Pre-Student Teaching Expectations" for a participant's quote regarding behavior management, and then refer to the domain of "What isn't working in the classroom" for the same participant's quote regarding

behavior management, to see how their perspective may have shifted. In Tables 2-7 below, categorizations are organized across 10 domains.

In the first domain regarding participants' early expectations for the student teaching experience, a common thread across all 10 participants' comments was either their confidence or lack thereof in establishing rapport and enduring relationships with their students. Each participant's quote listed below was selected from larger reflections in order to highlight specific references to the theme of building rapport with students.

Table 2.
Early Expectations

Pseudonym	Early Expectations (pre-student teaching)
Nick	I'm most looking forward to creating long-lasting relationships with my students where they reach out to me later on to ask for help with college or job advice.
Will	I feel confident that I will be able to make personal connections with my students while maintaining professional integrity. I think there will be several interests that we have in common that will facilitate a relationship with the students.
Kate	I feel confident in my ability to connect with students and empathize with them because my personality is very open to looking at things through other people's perspectives. This summer when I was a camp counselor, I made strong connections with several campers by showing interest in their lives and being supportive of them when they confided in me.
Luke	Since my students are only a few years younger than me, it will be important to establish a professional student/teacher relationship with them. I want to be friendly, engaging, and helpful, but it is important that they do not view me as a peer.
Paul	I'm looking forward to getting to know students and making a direct impact on their lives. I feel I'm energetic when lecturing and can be funny. The combination of energy and humor can be engaging if done properly.
Grant	I feel confident in the rapport that I can form with students. I have strong relationships with many people and am always eager to form new ones and follow up on old ones.
John	The thing I'm looking forward to the most is the kids by a long shot. Middle and high school kids are some of the most creative and daring people. They're incredible and difficult, which makes them fun to work with.
Elle	I think the kids are going to like me. I think they're realizing that I'm cool and not like this weird, strict teacher that's not going to let them have any fun. I think the bowl of candy that I have doesn't hurt either.
Jade	I think the students will be challenging sometimes, but I think that will be a good learning process for me.
Leigh	I feel like I have to grow a spine and work up the courage to get students to be quiet and listen to me, but I'm afraid it will take so much time that by the time I get the hang of it, the students won't respect me.

In the second and third domains regarding participants' reflections about what was and was not working throughout the student teaching experience, several students commented on successfully building rapport with students. On the contrary, many students expressed a lack of effectiveness when trying to implement classroom management strategies.

Table 3.
What Is versus What Is Not Working

Pseudonym	What Is Working	What Is Not Working
Nick	I am connecting with the students and teachers to gain respect and acknowledgment. I feel like I have free reign which gives me a little more confidence.	I need to improve on cracking down on students who are being disruptive. I do not know what is the best method to go about assigning punishment to students who cause distractions from learning.
Will	I'm getting to know more of the students and staff and feel more at home there.	
Kate	Creating connections with students. By asking my students more about their school activities (clubs, sports, etc.) and jobs, they trust me more. My students seem more willing to talk to me and enjoy that I care about them outside of them being my student.	I haven't figured out to get the class to settle down after activities yet. I'm afraid to say something in the middle of a lesson because I do not want to disrupt it, but sometimes it's hard to ignore. I'm not following through with warnings. For some students, the warning isn't enough to keep them from doing what they know they should not be doing.
Luke	Any time that I can relate something to the students to make class seem more relevant. They enjoyed talking about something that wasn't just in the textbook.	The one thing that can be tough is maintaining an enthusiastic and engaging demeanor. The main reason I have trouble with this is that I am teaching a class of seniors who are suffering from a terrible case of senioritis. I try not to let their lack of energy carry over to my teaching, but I have caught myself zombie-ing my way through a lesson. If I don't bring any energy to the class it is nearly impossible to get participation out of the class.
John		Some students just don't want to learn and that really confuses and frustrates me. I understand that some work may be trivial, but everything has the minimal purpose of following directions. This is one of the hardest

		things I'm struggling with right now. I'm always torn between letting them fall further behind because they should be old enough to understand how important school is. I don't feel like I'm drowning, but I feel like I'm staying just above water.
Elle	I get a lot of comments from students about how they want me to teach instead of my cooperating teacher. One of my kiddos even asked if I could teach her until May when school ends. It was really cool to hear that. It was nice to get those compliments.	In my remedial class that's repeating freshman English, we're reading books and taking things slowly. In that class are my three worst students; let's just call them Jane 1, Jane 2, and Jane 3. Jane 1 is the ringleader and is the worst student by far from her total attitude problem and lack of care for school. She called my cooperating teacher a bitch during an argument they had about an inappropriate shirt and it totally disrupted the vibe in the classroom. The other kids, I think, actually want to learn and are there for help. Jane 1 is there because somebody else just passed her off to us. It's just frustrating to have a kid like Jane 1 and I really don't want to give up on her, but she's already pushing both of our buttons.
Jade	I really like the students a lot, and I think they like me too. I have been getting good responses through this process.	I would say probably classroom management is the biggest challenge. Just because, as much as I am in charge, it's still not my class per se, and so the students are used to a specific environment already. And so for me to come in, in the middle of the year, and I didn't realize how much of a softy my teacher was at first until I tried to be more assertive…and since it wasn't what they were used to, they pushed back even more.
Leigh		Today pretty much sucked. I took over the 12th grade class and it was a train wreck. The class is made up of rudimentary students and I just couldn't get them to pay attention...the students were on their phones, poking each other, or sleeping. I kept telling them that they had to follow along because at the end of each chapter I was going to ask questions and everyone had to at least speak once or they'd lose points.

were on their phones, poking each other, or sleeping. I kept telling them that they had to follow along because at the end of each chapter I was going to ask questions and everyone had to at least speak once or they'd lose points. It turns out they were more than happy to share and kept yelling answers no matter how many times I asked them to raise their hands.

Today sucked. They were talking so much that no one could hear each other and everyone was getting frustrated. One of the kids called out to my cooperating teacher and said, "Can you teach us because she sucks!" I'm at my wits end with these kids.

In the fourth domain regarding participants' reflections about what improvements they've made in practice throughout the student teaching experience, several students continued to comment on working hard to improve their implementation of classroom management strategies.

Table 4.
Improvements Made in Practice

Pseudonym	Improvements Made in Practice
Nick	I worked hard on my classroom management this week. I definitely saw improvements in my classes with my students' behaviors by giving them some physical work to do with the snap circuits. I also changed up seats since I know who talks to who, so I can control the engagements in class.
Kate	I have improved a lot with classroom management and it is something I am still working on. It has been difficult at times to discipline students because they are only a few years younger than me. It has been hard to separate that but I have learned to put that thought to the side and remind myself that I am the teacher and it is my job to follow through with consequences.
Luke	Learning names, tendencies, and hobbies of students has also been helpful when it comes to managing the class and creating relevance.
John	I have improved the most in classroom management. I think it just took a few weeks for the kids to understand that I am the boss and they cannot push me around. Like getting everyone's attention and keeping it for a whole classroom.
Leigh	I have started circulating the room a lot more when the students are doing individual work. I also tried using some phrases that hopefully are triggers to let the students know that they need to listen to me.

In the fifth and sixth domains regarding whether participants' expectations for the student teaching experience aligned with or differed from the realities that transpired over the course of the semester, participants' reflections highlighted themes ranging from classroom management strategies, to time management, to establishing trusting relationships with students.

Table 5.
Expectations Aligned versus Expectations Differed

Pseudonym	Expectations Aligned with Reality	Expectations Differed from Reality
Kate	I expected that there would be students who would try to push me and my position as an authority figure and surely enough I have experienced that in the classroom. I also expected it to be challenging to tailor my lessons to the needs of every type of learner, which has been something I've experienced, though I am learning to handle it.	I expected most of my challenges to be lesson and content-based, however, they have been more related to classroom management. I have had to make several write ups for students who have been disrupting class for almost no reason. The first time around, I did not know how to handle that because I wasn't expecting to have many issues there. I have also found that the students I thought would be more disruptive when I was doing my observations are not students who disrupt the lesson during my actual teaching experience.
John	…something that has lined up is how not bad 8th graders are. I had no fears going in, but people always said that 8th graders sucked. Maybe I got lucky, but for the most part I have an amazing group of students who want to learn and participate.	…something that has been way harder is classroom management. I always said we never get enough experience in the classroom before our student teaching. Just having the presence, the first day there of being the boss would have been a lot easier if I had done it before.
Leigh	I knew from looking around on the teacher sub-Reddit that it was likely to be a ball of different emotions.	Almost all of my field experiences were just observations, and it was in the middle of the semester

| | | when expectations and respect had already been established. In the Basic class the disrespect is expected to a certain degree, but even in the Academic classes I still get a little sass when I assign what they consider too much homework. I expected all of my academic students to I guess be trained in that they should listen to me and not question my decisions on how I teach. |

In the seventh and eighth domains regarding participants' views of their own personal strengths versus areas for improvement as beginning teachers, many students spoke to themes such as content knowledge and building rapport as areas of strength, and classroom management as a major area for improvement.

Table 6.
Strengths versus Areas for Improvement

Pseudonym	Strengths	Areas For Improvement
Nick		I need to work on my classroom management for all the classes and be more stern about what I do in the classroom. I want to work on my assertiveness and have a better presence in the classroom.
		I still have a lot to go with classroom management being halfway through student teaching, but I am ready to kick off the second half. My target for development is a better overall classroom environment when we get back.
		I still need to improve on cracking down on students who are being disruptive. I do not know what the best method is to go about assigning punishment to students who cause distractions from learning.
Kate	I feel I have a good grasp of knowledge on the content I'm teaching. I always do extra	Discipline – I definitely need to be stricter as I have probably been too nice during the process. I need to be

	research so I have tidbits and stories to share to deepen and enrich my students' learning. I also give them lessons that cover a wide array of topics so students can hit all the bases in what they're learning for each unit.	more confident in disciplining students. I still find that I am nervous coming into school and unsure of myself and my lesson plans. I need to improve in knowing that sometimes students sleeping in my class isn't a reflection of me as a teacher.
Luke	I have always found it easier to explain content to individuals or small groups. This may be because the students who seek help are more engaged and more motivated than those who do not. Content knowledge has not been an issue.	Teaching a group of seniors who lack motivation has required a lot of patience. There is an obvious lack of attention to detail on the students end, and I frequently have to repeat myself. Students will miss questions that we cover and emphasize several times throughout a unit, and this can be frustrating.
John	One of my strengths is the relationships I make with the kids. I just connect with them about their interests and they want to know about my life which is flattering. I hope this continues throughout my whole life as a teacher.	One of my areas of improvement is classroom management. More specifically getting the students to hear my instructions once and not having to repeat myself. It makes me so frustrated, but I just repeat for the 6th time in 30 seconds to turn to page 116. Another area is having students listen to one student's opinion at a time. My 3rd hour class loves to talk all at once and it can be a bit over-whelming. I continue to struggle with that classroom management. I need to just be firm with what I say and can't change it class to class or person to person.
Elle	Okay, definitely my number one is I'm good at establishing relationships not just with the students but with the faculty, the administration. I feel close to the people here.	The most challenging. One thing, definitely classroom management, as we've talked about. That took me a while to get it under my thumb. I was not prepared for it.
Jade		I feel like I especially struggle with classroom management in 7th period. I know it's the last period of the day for most of these students, and English is the last thing they want to be doing. I just don't know what to do. My cooperating teacher said she really struggles with them as well and wonders if we should try to wrap up

		the class even sooner. I told her I feel like they'll just check out even sooner if we do that. I understand the attitude I give the students is the attitude they give back to me. I just don't know what to do
Jade		I feel like I especially struggle with classroom management in 7th period. I know it's the last period of the day for most of these students, and English is the last thing they want to be doing. I just don't know what to do. My cooperating teacher said she really struggles with them as well and wonders if we should try to wrap up the class even sooner. I told her I feel like they'll just check out even sooner if we do that. I understand the attitude I give the students is the attitude they give back to me. I just don't know what to do sometimes because there are times that I know I get unnecessarily frustrated with them and it's something that I don't realize until after. A continued area of improvement would be classroom management; I am not sure though whether the issue is me or if the issue lies within the differences between my classroom management style and my cooperating teacher's. I like to think that me and my cooperating teacher have a similar approach, but I just think that this is the category in which we differ the most. I think that it is harder for me to come in and approach things the way I would want to because she has had most of the students for 2 or 3 years so they are very used to the way that she runs things.
Leigh	Perseverance – there have been some days that I just either want to quit or go off on a student, but I think I've done a good job on remaining professional.	I don't know how to shut someone disruptive down without going overboard. I'm constantly afraid of going too far and getting in trouble…the trick I have to figure out is getting students to understand the

	way I think and the reason I explain things.
	Confidence – I have none. I feel like students are constantly questioning why we're doing activities and even after I explain how it's relevant, they still don't like to do it.

In the ninth and tenth domains regarding participants' views of their teacher education program's strengths versus areas for improvement, many students spoke to themes such as content study and lesson planning as strengths, and practical application of teaching skills as a major area for improvement.

Table 7.
Teacher Education Program (TEP) Successes versus Areas for Improvement

Pseudonym	TEP Successes	TEP Areas for Improvement
Will	I think the TEP has adequately prepared me to prepare lessons with meaningful activities. The program taught me how to ask provocative, meaningful questions to students to facilitate learning.	I think the TEP should have less theory-based instruction and more practical application of pedagogy.
Kate	I think my TEP has done well in preparing me content-wise so my classes cover topics I need to master to teach and pass my content exams. It's also done well in providing education courses that allow me to bond with people in my major so I have other to talk to about assignments and situations that understand my perspective.	I don't feel that I've had thorough opportunities for practical application in my TEP. I've really only been in classrooms two times and those were mainly classes where I spent most of my time observing the class. It hasn't showed me what it's like to be the teacher in the room. I think the ideal TEP would include some classroom experience a semester before formal student teaching in order to help us student teachers feel more comfortable going into the experience. I learned almost nothing about classroom management in my teacher education program prior to the semester of student teaching. My education classes that semester were the only ones that went into depth of how to handle situations with students and how to keep a classroom running efficiently Pedagogy/Theory: I believe that my teacher education program could have done a much better job of teaching

		pedagogy and theory. Most of my classes that taught these topics were in my first year of college and the information was forgotten by my senior year.
Luke	One thing that my teacher education has prepared me well for is using different methods of instruction.	I definitely feel like I could be more prepared than I currently am for my student teaching experience. More opportunities to teach in actual classrooms, and another class on teaching econ would have been beneficial to me.
		I felt unprepared like I barely had any teaching experience. Since this is what you do every day as a teacher, I feel like more practice and actually teaching would be helpful.
Paul	The TEP has prepared me for creating individual LPs.	The ideal TEP would feature more classroom observations and actual teaching opportunities, preferably every semester. It would make me feel more comfortable with being in the classroom frequently.
Grant	My TEP allowed me to observe classroom which I believe reinforced my career decision. In these observations, I got to see teachers teach from a new perspective.	I believe my TEP has failed to teach me exactly what it's like to be a teacher. I understand that's why I'm student teaching this semester, but I feel like the teaching aspect of social studies ed has been put on the backburner for me.
		Practical applications such as how to use a gradebook/grade in general, how to discipline students and other applications I can't think of at the moment have not been thoroughly taught or taught at all.
		I expected to learn more about how to be a teacher. The TEP, in my opinion, puts that on the backburner until the last semester. Because of this, I feel like I haven't been fully prepared as a teacher. My last time I was present in a classroom was the falls semester of my sophomore year. For me to be thrown into student teaching with a two year gap of no real experience in a classroom scares me.
John	I think my TEP prepared me for how to structure an LP. I feel like no matter what lesson I ever make, I can always have a solid	I think my TEP has lacked in giving me opportunities to teach full lessons to a class. I've only done this a handful of times outside my practicum experience

base because I know how to make a well-designed LP. I also know how to structure a unit because I've learned this multiple times from completing them in my ed prep classes. I'm glad I had that experience.

and that really has shocked me. I think practical application is a vital part of the learning process that is ignored in the TEP. I think executing all the aspects of a full lesson is key and it just wasn't enough times for me. I would require my TEP to have a practical experience every semester. It would be beneficial because we can theorize in a classroom all day, but nothing beats witnessing the real thing in my opinion.

One thing the teacher education programmed could have better prepared me for was being the authority figure in the front of the class. We do not get nearly enough practice in my opinion. Maybe even making us be subs for a semester would really help with that.

One of the things they didn't prepare me for is the student dynamic and stuff. So, obviously, the classroom management skills,

Elle		I've been struggling to take what we've read in our textbooks and apply it to here. I know that other teachers feel the same, but like it's on us. I don't think it's Purdue; I think it's just...It wasn't a reality for us until we were here...It was like student teaching was always this very distant thing for me of like, "Yeah, that's the last thing I have to do before I graduate."

It's definitely scary, because you transition from being the one that receives the grades, to giving the grades, and it's like there's no medium there. There's no like, "Hey, let's practice this." |
| **Jade** | In my teacher education, I feel the most prepared in the areas of differentiated instruction. I have learned so many different models and so I feel like I have a lot to work with there. | I don't feel like my teacher education prepared me enough in the art of student-teacher relationships. I don't feel prepared to deal with the students who constantly butt heads with you. I don't feel prepared to deal with the students who flat out refuse to work, and I don't feel prepared to deal with the students who have a low motivation no matter what the task at hand. I don't feel like asking teacher education |

		students to make accommodations is enough. It is hard to make these accommodations if you don't know much about the teacher-student relationships and methods to approach differing situations.
Leigh	I think it prepared me well for dealing with people from different backgrounds (as far as cultures). I feel like 80% of my education classes were focused on not offending anyone.

I also feel like I was prepared well for coming up with a variety of activities. I feel like I can finagle the standards into fitting my activities pretty well. | Classroom and time management. I feel like these are always the 2 areas that I'm falling short on. For classroom management, when I was teaching the Basic class I never felt like they respected me and that they could do whatever they wanted. I never really felt like I was prepared for how to gain respect without firm discipline like sending them to the office.

It's like for my practicums that I've done for the other classes, I was just required to be in the class for a certain amount of time. They didn't care what I did. I could sit there on my phone, so if they were to require in the actual practicums that we teach more, that would've been very helpful to me. This was actually the first time that I've actually got in front in a class and taught. All my other classes, they were just observations. Just getting up there and having to plan and seeing how that is throughout the day, that would've been very helpful to me. I never had to teach at all until student teaching. I got up, and I was thrown into student teaching. Like, I don't know what to do with you people. |

Findings

This section summarizes the key findings of 10 participants' narratives surrounding their student teaching experiences. The section is divided into four subsections, three of which describe the findings of research questions 1, 2, and 3, and one that summarizes the findings as a whole.

The first research question asked, "What stories do content area teacher candidates tell about their first teaching experiences?" Although participants' stories differed ranging from the age and grade level of their students, or even the contexts in which their respective schools were situated, participants' stories also presented many commonalities. The most prominent stories that all participants shared throughout the 16-week time period of data collection included the following:

1. Although teacher candidates shared both positive and negative stories, stories pertaining to their negative experiences became increasingly salient with each passing week of the student teaching experience.

2. Teacher candidates shared stories about confidence-provoking aspects of their teacher identities at the beginning of the semester. The positive aspects of these stories often decreased with each passing week of the student teaching experience. The summary section of research question 3 discusses these aspects in greater detail.

3. Teacher candidates shared stories about what they wish they had spent more time learning throughout their teacher preparation, before entering the student teaching experience. Stories about how their teacher preparation influenced their confidence and student teaching experiences began as minor talking points at the start of the semester, but increased throughout their student teaching experiences.

The second research question asked, "To what extent does teacher preparation affect self-efficacy of content area teacher candidates?" Participants described the various ways their teacher preparation adequately and inadequately prepared them for student teaching, supporting the notion that teacher preparation does, in fact, affect teacher candidates' sense of effectiveness. Beyond specific reference to the relationship, however, research question 2 was primarily concerned with analyzing whether or not the participants felt that their teacher preparation influenced their efficacy perceptions throughout the student teaching experience; additionally, based on those experiences was an interest to discover how participants' self-efficacy may have shifted during their transitions from PSTs to teacher candidates.

From participants' early reflections, it was evident that teacher preparation impacted the positive and negative experiences they endured throughout student teaching and, accordingly, affected their self-efficacy beliefs. As a student, Will was especially thoughtful and philosophical in both his written work and occasional classroom commentary. His student teaching stories provided evidence for the positive influence teacher preparation had on his efficacy beliefs, specifically related to lesson planning and prompting evocative discussions. Furthermore, learned strategies for establishing positive relationships with students throughout his teacher preparation were noticeably influential on his confidence as a teacher candidate. Alternatively, Kate viewed the considerable impact of teacher preparation on her student teaching experience through a noticeably negative lens.

Kate, like Will, was an especially thoughtful and introspective teacher candidate. Although she frequently referenced her instructional insecurities in written reflections and classroom discussions, she often followed up with unprompted comments about how she would work to improve those insecurities and request additional feedback from fellow classmates. Kate's story provided evidence for how teacher preparation impacted her efficacy beliefs, specifically related to creative lesson planning and opportunities for the practical application of her skills. Resulting from inadequate op-

portunities to "actually teach" prior to the student teaching experience, Kate lacked confidence in her ability to successfully teach compelling lessons. She believed increased opportunities for the trial and error process of teaching throughout her teacher education program would have reduced her anxiety upon beginning the student teaching experience.

Similar to Kate, Luke's low efficacy beliefs throughout student teaching were tied to limited opportunities to teach lessons during teacher preparation. Luke, one of the more jovial and laid-back participants that I worked with throughout the semester, described feeling underprepared to teach economics content effectively and wished his teacher preparation incorporated numerous teaching opportunities to help build his confidence.

Paul, similar to Luke in that he was a comic relief throughout our Literacy Methods course, sang a different tune than Luke and Kate. He expressed the positive influence that his teacher education program's opportunities for observation had on his confidence. Although he continuously worried about instructional practices, such as creating an inclusive classroom for English Language Learners, he maintained a generally positive attitude about his teacher preparation experience.

John, an always-eager, imaginative, and cheerful PST and teacher candidate, spoke about increased opportunities to develop compelling lesson plans and greater insight into the complex demands of the teaching profession that "you don't talk about in class" as teacher preparation elements that would have positively informed his student teaching experience. Similar to most participants, he valued the opportunity to learn by doing and wished teacher preparation provided additional opportunities to not only observe, but experience the ups and downs of teaching to inform his practice. Amid his expression of this desire, he referenced one of Benjamin Franklin's most recognizable quotes as a defense for his stance: "Tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn."

Aligned with John's feelings, Elle, the most energetic, optimistic, and boisterous participant, was frustrated and stressed that her teacher education program did not spend more time highlighting the many day-to-day demands of the teaching profession. Furthermore, she believed that increased practical opportunities to draw connections between the demands discussed during coursework preparation, and the realities that would likely transpire throughout student teaching, would have been beneficial to her preservice training and subsequent student teaching semester.

Jade, an especially pensive participant who often second-guessed her decisions, referenced a variety of influences that teacher preparation had on her efficacy perceptions throughout student teaching. While she felt adequately prepared in the area of differentiated instruction, she, like many other participants, felt unequipped to handle the numerous challenging demands that transpired throughout student teaching. She described how she was disappointed in her teacher education program for sending

her into student teaching without confidence to handle "all the things they don't teach you."

Leigh, the participant who most visibly lacked confidence in her personal and professional identity, described the inadequacies of her teacher preparation as having a negative influence on her efficacy perceptions throughout the student teaching experience. When she described the major areas she struggled with throughout her student teaching, she referenced "zero" learning opportunities for practicing and building confidence with strategies such as classroom management and broader pedagogy.

The third research question asked, "Which recurrent themes of teacher preparation affect self-efficacy of teacher candidates, regardless of content area?" Participants described their student teaching experiences and highlighted the strengths and weakness of their teacher preparation which, in turn, impacted their efficacy beliefs. In some cases, participants felt very well-prepared by the knowledge attained throughout their teacher education programs. In other cases, participants felt that certain limitations in their teacher preparation contributed to the challenging circumstances they faced throughout their student teaching experiences.

The researcher identified recurrent themes by examining participants' salient quotes across 10 domains. Recurrent themes were then labeled as follows: 1) Practical Application Opportunities; 2) Classroom Management Strategies; 3) Reality of Teaching Profession Demands. These themes were used to guide the construction of each participant's narrative.

Theme 1: Practical application opportunities

Throughout the study, the most salient recurring theme that impacted participants' self-efficacy beliefs was the relationship between theory-based coursework experiences and practical application opportunities. Although some participants briefly referenced a lack of practical application opportunities in their early-semester reflections, by their mid and late-semester reflections, participants attributed their decreased confidence and general classroom effectiveness to inadequate opportunities to "actually teach" throughout their teacher preparation.

For instance, Will explained that opportunities for practical teaching experiences throughout teacher preparation would have bolstered his confidence during student teaching. He, like many participants, expressed that while the emphasis on studying theory in his classrooms was beneficial, with few opportunities to connect the theory-based instruction to actual ***application*** experiences, his overall sense of preparedness remained limited.

Echoing Will's comments, Kate described limited practical teaching opportunities throughout teacher preparation as a direct factor that influenced her efficacy perceptions from start to end of the student teaching experience. She also stated that her inexperience with instructional practice exacerbated her self-doubt throughout the se-

mester.

Continuing the trend, Luke and Paul felt unprepared to reach their full potential as confident, efficacious teachers due to limited opportunities to practice teaching lessons throughout teacher preparation. Throughout student teaching, they continuously stated that increased opportunities to teach in authentic classrooms during preparation would have improved their practice and, accordingly, improved their teacher candidate efficacy beliefs.

Grant, a compassionate PST who exhibited great passion for teaching creative lessons, but struggled in areas such as organization and time management when I worked with him as a student, expressed similar frustrations to other participants regarding limited opportunities to experience what it actually feels like to teach lessons multiple times per week. Beyond feeling unprepared, he described feeling afraid about having to teach every day after going two years without teaching lessons during teacher preparation.

Similar to most participants, John struggled to understand why more time was spent *talking* about teaching than actually *practicing* teaching throughout teacher preparation, and he viewed this as having a negative impact on his confidence throughout student teaching.

Elle, like John, felt that she did not gain enough practical teaching experience throughout teacher preparation and attributed her incompetence with administering and grading assessments to the limited opportunities for practice throughout her coursework. Elle's efficacy beliefs appeared to decrease from the start to end of her student teaching semester, once she realized that she did not feel as confident leading a classroom as she initially anticipated.

Aligned with the perspectives of all other participants, Leigh expressed that fewer observations and additional practical teaching opportunities would have helped her develop confidence and overall preparedness as a teacher candidate. Although Leigh expressed low levels of efficacy from the start of the semester, her beliefs appeared to decline as she dealt with a series of onerous hurdles such as students throwing chairs or screaming expletives at her throughout student teaching.

Theme 2: Classroom management strategies

An additional salient recurring theme that notably affected participants' self-efficacy beliefs was knowledge of how to effectively employ classroom management strategies to redirect disruptive and/or disrespectful student behaviors. With the exception of one participant, Nick, who expressed confidence in classroom management during his pre-student teaching reflections, all participants described feelings of insecurity and ineffectiveness in this area from start to end of their written reflections and semi-structured interviews. Within his mid-semester reflections, however, Nick's views fell in line with the perspectives of fellow participants who viewed classroom

management as a major source of self-efficacy degradation. Woven throughout his many reflections, Nick's efficacy beliefs regarding classroom management significantly decreased throughout student teaching. Although he initially entered student teaching with confidence in his classroom management abilities, numerous behavior management challenges that he did not possess the knowledge or skills to combat, ultimately deteriorated his efficacy beliefs.

Will, Kate, and Paul all expressed similar concerns as Nick when emphasizing that classroom management continued to be their most challenging and intimidating responsibility as teacher candidates. Additionally, they cited limited opportunities to learn about how to employ effective classroom management techniques throughout teacher preparation as an inadequacy that demands more attention from teacher educators.

John, aligned with all other participants, felt that classroom management was not sufficiently discussed or practiced throughout teacher preparation. Furthermore, he believed that additional opportunities to experiment with employing classroom management techniques would have been beneficial to his confidence as a teacher candidate.

Elle, Jade, and Leigh all emotionally expressed their dissatisfaction with the way classroom management strategies were absent from their teacher preparation, which they described as having a major negative impact on their confidence and overall development as teacher candidates. They believed that opportunities to gain practical experience and advance their classroom management skills during teacher preparation would have positively influenced their management outcomes throughout student teaching.

Theme 3: Reality of teaching profession demands

The third most salient recurring theme that impacted participants' confidence and self-efficacy beliefs was the opportunity to experience the realistic daily demands of the teaching profession, including those that exist outside the realm of content and pedagogical knowledge. Each participant expressed instances where their confidence as a teacher candidate was lowered due to limited opportunities to acquire knowledge and experience about what it is "really like" to be a teacher throughout teacher preparation.

Although theme 3 is closely connected to themes 1 and 2, the quotes highlighted in this theme represent participants' generalized statements regarding their lack of experience in learning what it means to be a teacher during preparation. Grant, for instance, emphasized that limited opportunities to teach full lessons, hone behavior management skills, and authentically ***experience*** the daily demands of the teaching profession negatively impacted his confidence upon beginning student teaching.

Beyond the inadequacies referenced by Grant, John expressed disappointment regarding limited opportunities to learn from experienced teachers throughout teacher

preparation. He believed that a course allowing PSTs to learn from experienced teachers, and their successful versus challenging experiences, would have provided beneficial and realistic insights to inform his developing teacher identity.

Elle asserted that what is taught throughout teacher preparation is not a realistic look into the complexities of the actual day-to-day teaching profession. She felt that there was no connection between learning about pedagogy and engaging in follow-up opportunities to apply her newfound pedagogical knowledge in practice. She also argued that teacher preparation requires renovation, because too many PSTs leave their teacher education programs with a positive, passionate, and uplifted idea about what it means to be a teacher. However, because teacher education programs do not accurately represent what it means to be a teaching professional, many teacher candidates leave their student teaching experiences feeling shell-shocked with discouraged, diminished efficacy beliefs.

Jade felt especially insecure and unprepared to deal with challenges of the teaching profession that exist *outside* of traditional lesson planning and instruction, such as listening to and advocating for students whose mental health and/or home-life circumstances negatively impacted their performance in the classroom. Jade, like all other participants, wished that teacher preparation had provided her with opportunities to learn from experienced teachers about how to deal with the aforementioned, less-traditional demands of the profession.

Research question 1 revealed that teacher candidates found storytelling to be a valuable form of expression throughout student teaching because it allowed them to assess the areas in which they felt confident and underprepared to tackle the challenges that transpired throughout the 16-week semester. Through sharing these stories, findings led to the outcomes of research questions 2 and 3. While research question 2 revealed that participants believed teacher preparation *did*, in fact, impact their efficacy beliefs from the start to the end of their student teaching experiences, the findings from research question 3 emphasized the three main areas that participants believed were inadequately addressed throughout teacher preparation. The three main areas, also labeled as themes in this study, included: 1) limited opportunities for the practical application of teaching; 2) nonexistent opportunities to learn about employing effective classroom management strategies; and, 3) insufficient education opportunities regarding the demanding complexities of the teaching profession.

Discussion

As evidenced throughout the findings of this study, many participants noted areas of teacher preparation that were deficient in equipping them with the skills necessary to develop strong senses of self-efficacy prior to student teaching. Direct quotes such as, "I felt unprepared" or "Mentally, I do not feel ready to be a successful teacher," among others, proved that most participants considered their teacher preparation to

be a primary source for achieving high levels of efficacy. Unfortunately, for many of them, the transition from preparation to student teaching was not as empowering as they initially hoped: "It's hard, you get thrown into it, so I was expecting it to be bad… I didn't really understand just how bad it would be."

In a study conducted by Swan, Wolf, and Cano (2011), findings suggested "teachers typically experience a decline in teacher self-efficacy from their student teaching experience" and that in order to prevent this decline, teacher educators must ensure PSTs do not have an "inflated sense of efficacy" when making the transition from teacher preparation to their first practical teaching experiences (p. 136). Additionally, researchers asserted "Because teachers typically experience a decline in teacher self-efficacy from their student teaching experience…adequate support should be provided to ensure that individuals do not crash" (Swan, Wolf, & Cano, 2011, p. 136). The results from Swan, Wolf, and Cano's (2011) study directly apply to participants such as Nick, Luke, and Elle who expressed higher levels of efficacy at the start of their student teaching, and lower levels of efficacy by the end of their experiences. Although this study was limited to assessing the self-efficacy beliefs of 10 teacher candidates from the same university, findings revealed that the quality and extent of what is taught throughout teacher preparation did impact the efficacy beliefs of teacher candidates in this study.

According to Ball and Forzani (2009), many teacher education programs overemphasize theoretical knowledge of the teaching profession and underemphasize practical application of the teaching profession by limiting the amount of opportunities that PSTs have to actually *teach* the lessons that they construct throughout their coursework. Since most participants in this study continuously referenced limited practical application opportunities throughout their teacher preparation as negatively impacting their sense of confidence and effectiveness during student teaching, it is evident that increased opportunities for emerging teachers to develop their instructional approaches prior to student teaching would positively impact their perceptions of efficacy upon entering student teaching (McLaurin et al., 2009).

The bottom line is that teachers want and need practical in-service activities that address their genuine needs in the classroom, make them better teachers, and that improve student outcomes. This must include coherent, relevant coursework that is tied to real-world practice and that includes learning experiences that build both teacher competence and confidence (WestEd, 2000. Cited in Bray-Clark & Bates, 2003, p. 14).

Along with increased opportunities for the practical application of instruction, findings of this study revealed that experience with employing effective classroom management strategies and gaining a deeper understanding of the internal and external demands of the teaching profession would be valuable learning opportunities during teacher preparation. Because teacher efficacy is a reciprocal cause and effect between an individual's external environment and internal personal factors (Bandura, 1997),

the findings of this study and prior research illuminate the cyclical relationship between teacher efficacy and influential factors such as classroom management, instructional quality, emotional exhaustion, and feelings of job stress (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Holzberger et al., 2013; Martin et al, 2012). Therefore, by providing PSTs with a thorough introduction to the profession's expectations during preparation, teacher candidates would likely improve their capacity to tackle the inevitable challenges that arise during student teaching, because they would have already experienced dealing with similar challenges in previous semesters (McLaurin et. al., 2009).

Since evidence supports "some of the most powerful influences on the development of teacher efficacy are mastery experiences during student teaching," it would be especially valuable for emerging teachers to possess high levels of efficacy prior to student teaching (Hoy and Spero, 2005, p. 343). These heightened efficacy beliefs would likely intensify during student teaching, as teacher candidates would gain more experience and confidence in their effectiveness to employ effective classroom management techniques and handle complicated obstacles such as time management, difficult parents, and a challenging classroom context, to name merely a few struggles of the teaching profession that exist outside of the pedagogical umbrella and were experienced by participants in this study.

Aligned with the 10 participants in this study, Julie, the aforementioned participant of Rushton's (2004) study, felt that realities of the teaching profession's extensive demands were not taught during teacher preparation. She was frustrated that her program failed to provide her the structure and practical advice she needed to maintain a desire to teach:

Julie stated, "one of the biggest things we have to deal with is problem behavior and classroom management, and we did not have one class on that, which I don't understand." Instead, Julie felt she was taught a "bunch of theories" and "cute ideas" that did not apply to typical school events: "What do you do with children who will not do their work, and every time someone even brushes them, they [explode in anger]"…She believed that a bit more structure…could have tipped the balance against her decision to leave. (Rushton, 2004, p. 73-74)

Based on additional studies by Borman and Dowling (2008), Guarino, Santibanez, and Daley (2006), and Perda (2013), data revealed that beginning teachers who quickly become overwhelmed by daily stressors and unexpected hurdles that were not comprehensively taught during teacher preparation are most likely to leave the profession. Therefore, if an ongoing goal is to retain the teachers that Elle referred to as "people who are super, super passionate about students and teaching and education" for the long-term, it is of utmost importance that the findings of this study and prior research are taken into consideration by teacher educators seeking tangible ways to improve teacher preparation.

Limitations

1.   This study was limited to the information acquired and attained from the literature review, participant demographics, partially guided written reflections, and semi-structured interviews.

2.   The findings were specific to one cohort group of teacher candidates (spring 2018 academic semester) in a variety of school districts in Indiana (10 campuses; 9 high schools; 1 middle school).

Implications

From the results, teacher educators can deepen their understanding of what secondary content area teacher candidates may require during preparation in order to feel better-prepared for student teaching and, in turn, achieve a heightened sense of efficacy throughout their development as emerging teachers.

In understanding and assessing the value of researching efficacy among emerging teachers, expanded efforts to magnify and implement efficacy-based research is necessary to determine the long-term implications of teacher preparation on teacher self-efficacy. As supported by Ross, Cousins, and Gadalla (1996), active interventions must be taken to impact teacher efficacy positively on a magnified scale.

With opportunities for professional development presenting themselves in a variety of forms, including collaboration about how to improve teacher education programs, Noffke (1997) asserted that teacher research collaboration allows teachers to most effectively examine their own classrooms through a critical lens, thus allowing them to evaluate and revitalize areas which could benefit from modification and variation. Through this participation, the theory that human agency serves as the infrastructure of efficacy growth among teachers is emboldened (Bandura, 1997). By using the findings presented in this study, teacher educators can engage in collaborative efforts and modify teacher education programs to incorporate comprehensive learning opportunities for PSTs before they enter their student teaching experiences.

Accordingly, one emphasized recommendation for assessing efficacy beliefs is for higher education institutions to present coursework and field experience-based opportunities for pre- and in-service teachers to examine their own confidence and sense of effectiveness in the field, especially throughout teacher preparation, since time is already set aside for critical reflection (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Researchers assert that professional development programs during both pre and in-service phases of the career are imperative to reinforce emerging teachers' confidence, as novice teachers will engage in activities and experiences that allow them to improve their instructional practices and classroom management skills, therefore, promoting natural increases in their efficacy perceptions.

Teachers must be well-informed of their own belief systems, as this cognizance serves to foster the understanding of alternative methods that may improve teachers'

self-efficacy beliefs (Ross, Cousins & Gadalla, 1996). Therefore, teacher educators can improve their course curricula and increase opportunities for PST self-reflection by using the findings and perspectives of the 10 teacher candidates presented in this study with suggestions including, but not limited to: implementing coursework related to classroom management strategies, providing increased opportunities for the practical application of pedagogy, and creating opportunities for thoughtful and realistic exploration of the teaching profession's numerous demands. By collecting information on emerging teachers' efficacy beliefs, researchers will have the opportunity to examine discrepancies tied to efficacy beliefs throughout various career stages and, more importantly, allow them to specify interventions for these discrepancies.

Furthermore, additional attention focused on providing sufficient and effective mentorship for teachers at any stage in their career, though perhaps especially the early-career teachers, would allow emerging teachers to (1) assess their efficacy beliefs earlier and (2) redirect their unavailing practices to establish stable efficacy beliefs and increased confidence (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). By stimulating higher levels of efficacy through comprehensive teacher preparation and substantial mentorship during the identity transition from pre-service to student-teacher and beyond, emerging teachers are more likely to leave student teaching with increased confidence in their practice, and thus are "far less likely to leave teaching after their first year on the job" (Redmon, 2007; Ingersoll, 2014, p. 29). Therefore, it is the responsibility of teacher educators to ensure course curricula address traditional areas such as theory, lesson planning, and content-area knowledge, as well as the areas that PSTs believe are under-taught and, in turn, leave them feeling unprepared for student teaching:

Teacher educators can no longer simply teach how to structure a lesson plan or outline the basics of reader-response theory; we have to assist our graduates in developing professional identities   that leave them feeling happy and satisfied, but that also result in good teaching and systemic improvement (Alsup, 2006, p. 195.)

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the implications outlined in the previous section, the following are recommendations for future research as a follow-up to this study:

1. Replicate this study with a different demographic of PSTs and teacher candidates, such as those selected from multiple universities spanning numerous regions, rather than limiting the participants to one cohort of PSTs at the same institution.

2. Conduct a study with in-service teachers who may view their early-career teaching challenges as the result of incomprehensive preparation during their teacher education programs.

3. Conduct a study to research tangible and substantive ways to strengthen teachers' connections of teacher preparation with self-efficacy.

4. Conduct a study to evaluate various ways that early-career teachers could pro-

vide evidence-based insights to teacher educators and contribute to the improvement of teacher education programs and preparation-based curricula.

    5. Conduct a longitudinal study to assess the short- and long-term influences of incomprehensive teacher preparation on teacher self-efficacy.

Conclusion

Through their stories, the 10 teacher candidates who participated in this study emphasized the value of adequate preparation throughout teacher preparation to inform their student teaching experiences. In order to feel efficacious, the teacher candidates required additional opportunities to practically apply their instructional skills prior to student teaching, the incorporation of classroom management strategy coursework into the curriculum, and opportunities to explore the teaching profession's extensive demands ranging from time management to dealing with external influences that impact students' behavior and participation in the classroom. The teacher candidates experienced feelings of insecurity and ineffectiveness when they struggled to employ successful classroom management strategies, differentiate pedagogy, and navigate challenging conversations with students, parents, and/or administrators, to name a few specific examples. As a result of these insecurities, all 10 teacher candidates asserted that increased opportunities to experience the many authentic demands of the teaching profession would have reinforced their efficacy beliefs upon entering student teaching and informed their practice throughout the 16-week semester. In order to help future teacher candidates (and novice teachers, in general) overcome these barriers, the implementation of additional coursework, fieldwork, and practical application experiences during teacher preparation may increase content area teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs.

While not generalizable, the findings bear implications for additions, modifications, and follow-ups that may be useful in planning teacher education curricula and practicum experiences. Although only 10 teacher candidates participated in this study, it was one of few studies to use narrative inquiry to add voice and increase understanding into the insights of teacher candidates' self-efficacy beliefs during the student teaching experience. This study revealed that participants experienced a decreased sense of teacher self-efficacy when they felt unprepared to employ effective classroom management strategies and pedagogical techniques, among other responsibilities of the demanding profession, suggesting that teacher candidates may benefit from receiving comprehensive knowledge and practical application opportunities during teacher preparation in order to experience increased self-efficacy beliefs throughout the student teaching experience.

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APPENDIX A

Written Reflection Questions

1. Why do you want to be a teacher? What influenced your decision?
2. Do you feel supported by friends, family, society, etc. in your decision to become a teacher? Why or why not? Tell me about a time when you did/didn't feel supported…
3. What do you feel confident about in teaching? Why? Tell me about a time when you felt confident…
4. What do you worry about regarding your teacher preparation/skills? Why? Tell me about a time you've worried about your teacher preparation…
5. What are you most looking forward to in your teaching career? Why?
6. What are you dreading the most about your future teaching career? Why? Tell me about some teaching challenges you've encountered…
7. What do you think your teacher education program has done well in preparing you for? Explain—try to use specific examples.
8. What do you think your teacher education program has lacked in providing you with a comprehensive education? Explain—try to use specific examples.
9. Do you feel you've had thorough opportunities for practical application in your teacher ed program? Why or why not?
10. Describe the ideal teacher education program—what would it include/exclude? Why/how do you think this teacher ed program would be particularly beneficial to preservice teachers?
11. Describe your idea of the 'effective' teacher—give some examples about what they might incorporate in the classroom/how they might interact with students.
12. What do you want to get out of this class? What do you hope this class prepares you for during your student teaching experience/future teaching career? Try to be as specific as possible.
13. What dispositional strength do you possess that will be implemented in your classroom during your student teaching experience? How will you employ this strength in your practice? What if it is ineffective, what will you do to address this challenge?
14. What dispositional challenge or concern do you believe may impact your teaching? What specific difficulties do you foresee? How will you address this challenge or concern?
15. Regarding your reflection on teaching dispositions, discuss your perceived readiness for your student teaching experience.

APPENDIX B

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your student teaching experience so far.
2. Tell me about your student teaching accomplishments and challenges.
3. How do you see your role as the teacher in motivating your students?
4. What strategies do you use that motivate students? Which ones are most effective? Which strategies have you found challenging and why?
5. How do you know when a student is motivated? How are you defining this?
6. Do you consider yourself an effective motivator? Why or why not?
7. What factors influence student motivation and/or success in your classroom? How are you defining student success/achievement?
8. What have you felt prepared for? Unprepared for?
9. Which factors of your teacher education preparation, if any, do you feel were lacking in your teacher education program? How do you think you could have been better prepared?
10. Have your expectations as a preservice teacher versus realities as a student teacher collided? If so, can you elaborate on that experience?
11. Tell me about some of your most positive student teaching experiences so far. How did you react in those moments? What did you do?
12. Tell me about some of your most challenging student teaching experiences so far. How did you react in those moments? What did you do?
13. As of right now, what do you think you're doing really well as a teacher and how do you know?
14. As of right now, what do you think you're struggling with most as a teacher and how do you know? How do you plan to move forward and improve these challenges?
15. Regarding your weekly reflections on teaching dispositions, discuss your perceived readiness for your student teaching experience versus your present realities.