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Unpacking the Code:
Exploring Teachers' Professional Development in Reading

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Abstract:
Teaching reading requires considerable knowledge and skill acquired over several years, and while communities and families contribute to students' reading success, teachers are the most influential forces for delivering high-quality reading programs. Professional development opportunities in reading enable teachers to augment their current curriculum content and pedagogical knowledge and can have a powerful effect on their practice and, ultimately, on student learning. We conducted a qualitative study exploring teachers' perceptions of reading development and instruction with nine elementary educators enrolled in a targeted

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professional development course. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted: once prior to the start of the professional development course and once following the professional development course. An inductive approach to analysis resulted in four main themes: seeking out new knowledge, evolving definitions of reading, transformative learning moments, and increases in self-efficacy for teaching reading. This study illustrates the transformative power a targeted professional development course can have on teachers' perceptions of reading. Professional development in reading that is relevant and properly resourced can significantly impact teachers' perceptions of their practice, their self-efficacy for teaching reading and, ultimately, have a positive effect on their students' growth in reading development. Additionally, understanding teachers' perceptions of their professional development in reading can contribute to the development and refinement of professional learning experiences.

Keywords: teacher professional development; reading instruction; teachers' perceptions

Biographical Notes

Pamela Beach is an assistant professor at Queen's University. She has a decade of elementary classroom experience, teaching a range of grades and subject areas. Her background as an elementary teacher has influenced her research which centres on the dissemination of research-informed literacy practices.

Jen McConnel is a teacher-researcher and a writer. A PhD candidate in Education at Queen's University of Kingston, Ontario, she holds a Master of Library Science and a Master of Arts in Children's Literature. Her research interests include new and multiliteracies, student beliefs about writing and teacher professional development.

Barbara Mendes is a Master's candidate in Education at Queen's University. She is interested in literacy-related learning disabilities. Barbara's research focuses on providing morphological awareness-based instruction as an essential component to science-based reading remediation.