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ABSTRACT

The present and future conditions of elementary teacher internship programs were considered in this study. A questionnaire was mailed to 67 California teacher preparation institutions and 43 institutions selected from other states. A follow-up study was conducted one year later to determine any program revisions that were occurring in the internship programs surveyed. It was found that intern programs exist in many different forms. Some are very nearly like student teaching-- the intern works closely with a certified teacher, has limited teaching responsibility, and minimal salary. Interns in other programs resemble the regular beginning teacher-- they have full teaching responsibility and commensurate salary. Automatic placement is provided in some programs, while in others the intern must compete with credentialed teachers for teaching positions. One institution offers the internship as the only means to becoming an elementary teacher; whereas in most cases the percentage of interns is small compared to the total number of credentials granted through the institution. Few substantial changes seem to be occurring that would suggest trends in internship programs. Most notable are those related to the over-supply of teachers and, in California, to certain requirements of the recent Ryan legislation. The elementary teaching internship exists in a great number of individual patterns. Although internships are regarded by many educators as being of limited value in times of teacher oversupply, others see them as a most promising means of teacher education. (MM)

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The Elementary Teaching Internship:

Does It Have A Future?

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In the face of the teacher "surplus" and declining college enrollments, a re-examination of patterns of teacher preparation has become a necessity. Shall the internship* survive?

The present study was conducted with just that question in mind, to serve as the basis for program planning. The purpose was to pull together information concerning the following:

1. When did the internship in teacher education begin? How was it developed over the years?

2. What is the nature of present intern programs? What are California programs like (since they would tend to exemplify the possibilities under the California Education Code)? What patterns have developed in other states (from which we might learn some other desirable directions in which to move)?

3. What trends are in evidence? What changes are taking place? How do teacher educators perceive the potential of internships?

Historical Overview of the Internship

The internship in teacher education is not a relatively recent development, although the increased numbers of such programs in the last 20 years tends to promote that idea. The earliest internship in teacher education dates back to 1909 at Brown University in Rhode Island.[1] Students in this program were placed in Providence Public Schools for one full year at the high school level. They served as half-time, salaried teachers, closely supervised by a professor of education and a supervising teacher. During their internship they were also enrolled in certain courses at the University.

A representative elementary school internship program came into being at the University of Cincinnati in 1919. Interns were required to complete a four-year curriculum, including education courses and a bachelor's degree (B.S. or B.A.) prior to admittance to the program. They were then assigned to classrooms in the public schools of Cincinnati, as half-time, salaried teachers. Normally, they received a B.Ed. degree at the end of the internship year.

Other internships came into being as an extension of the usual two-year normal school course for preparing teachers. Thus, a new teacher, having completed the two-year normal school, would continue to be under the supervision of the normal school faculty while being assigned for one year as a regular salaried elementary teacher in a cooperating school.[2]

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* The internship is defined, for present purposes, as a mode of preparation for teaching characterized by (1) salary for the teacher candidate, (2) classroom teaching responsibility, (3) supervision by the college/university, and (4) related college/university course work.

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Before 1920 similar teacher education programs were established in Boston, Cleveland, Minneapolis, Seattle, Buffalo, and Gary. They were generally characterized by the provision of increased supervision for beginning teachers. They were also evidence of the growing belief that theory is most meaningful when applied in a real situation. The intern's classroom served as a very real laboratory in which to apply the theories of the classroom.

By the late 1920s, internships were considered to be a vital form of preparation for many professions. However, due to a teacher shortage, it was less feasible to require an additional year of preparation such as was often associated with the internship.

Economic conditions of the early 1930s and the resultant school-related conditions were much as they are today. There was relatively little money available to support public education; school expansion diminished; and teacher turnover decreased substantially, resulting in an oversupply of teachers. School districts were employing fewer teachers and could exercise an increasing degree of selectivity.

In some instances the internship became a means by which a teacher education institution could place its graduates as teachers. Living on the meager salary of an intern was often "rewarded" the following year by the gaining of a regular teaching position within the district.

The economic and political conditions of the U.S. have had much to do with teacher education. In times of teacher oversupply, especially in the 1930s and the present, there is the possibility for greater selectivity of teacher prospects, adherence to higher standards, and an extension of the period of preparation--in short, a general upgrading of teacher quality is possible. In times of teacher shortage (e.g., during World War II and following it until about 1970) the tendency is to seek new shorter ways by which to induct teachers into the profession. The internship realized a new impetus during this period. It was seen as a way to attract people into teaching who had not previously prepared for it directly. A college graduate, employed in some other occupation, could become an intern with a minimum of disruption of his normal salary. Several weeks of study and student teaching-like experiences in the summer were sufficient for entering the classroom as a teacher (intern).

The primary features or strengths of internship programs are that they...

- promote close working relationships with school districts.
- provide highly motivated experience due to the continuing day-to-day work in the classroom.
- exemplify the learn-by-doing philosophy.
- closely relate theory and practice.
- aid school districts with differentiated staff patterns.
- provide an alternative to student teaching for persons of unusual ability and/or outstanding educational experience.

- provide the financial means for a more mature person to enter the profession from a prior occupation.

Current Data: Procedures

To gain up-to-date information concerning selected existing internship programs, a questionnaire was mailed to the 67 California colleges and universities that had been identified as preparing elementary teachers, and to 43 out-of-state institutions. The latter group was selected on the basis of being known to have had an intern program in the past or by virtue of reputation as a leader in higher education/teacher education.

One hundred one institutions responded to the questionnaire (out of 110) for a total response of 92 per cent. Of these, 29 reported having internship programs for the preparation of elementary teachers: 14 in California, 15 in other states. A great deal of specific information concerning programs was obtained through responses to this 7-page, 43-item questionnaire.

A year later, a brief follow-up survey was made of the same 110 institutions, focusing upon program revisions since the previous year and anticipated changes for 1976-77. Response this time was again 92 per cent. Thirty-six institutions reported having internship programs for the preparation of elementary teachers: 16 in California, 20 in other states.

The material that follows is based upon data from both of the surveys.

The Nature of Present Intern Programs

Data received from institutions that currently have internship programs for the preparation of elementary teachers indicate that internship programs exist under a great variety of circumstances and forms.

- Two intern programs in California have existed for about 21 years which is several years longer than programs reported by out-of-state institutions. California also has a number of programs that are six years old or less. A majority of the out-of-state programs have existed from eight to twelve years.

- California programs tend to be smaller than those in other states. Seven of the California programs (50 per cent) include 12 or fewer interns; the largest three programs have 50 - 56 interns. Among the out-of-state programs, only three (20 per cent) have 12 or fewer interns; 12 (63 per cent) of the programs have 36 or fewer interns; the largest three programs include 350 - 444 interns. Considering all the programs that reported both years, thirteen had decreased enrollment, seven had increased, three had remained the same.

- Most intern programs involve the teacher institution with several school districts.

- Many institutions and districts agree in advance regarding the placement of interns, so that interns are placed into "slots" designated for interns. Interns at other institutions must apply to districts and be employed as a regular teacher would. The pattern mentioned first is dominant in out-of-state institutions, while in California the two practices are about equally common.

- Intern programs in California are primarily for graduate students. About one-half of the out-of-state institutions include, or are primarily for, undergraduate students. Work as an intern may advance the candidate toward an advanced degree (e.g., M.A. or M.A.T.) in several institutions (California, 3; out-of-state, 6).

- Intern programs in most institutions prepare only a small fraction of the total number of teacher candidates each year. However, one California institution offers no other way but the internship, and two out-of-state institutions report that more than 50 per cent of their credential candidates are prepared through internships each year.

- Interns in California are frequently paid full-time beginning teacher salaries for full-time teaching responsibilities. The "rule" in out-of-state institutions is that interns are paid two-thirds salary, one-half salary, or less. The teaching responsibilities in many cases are less than full-time; sometimes they are placed with an experienced teacher in the manner of a student teacher. Even in out-of-state institutions where interns carry full-time teaching responsibilities, however, the salaries are usually but a fraction of that of a regular beginning teacher.

- Very few of the internship programs receive special funding.

Changes, Trends, and Potential

Respondents were asked to provide information concerning recent or anticipated program changes, as well as to convey their personal belief about the long-range future and/or potential of the internship in teacher education.

- Nearly all the institutions having intern programs (34; 94 per cent) report that their programs are essentially the same this year (1975-76) as they were last year. The few changes mentioned are as follows:

  "There has been an improvement in training supervisors to evaluate competent student teaching."

  "Increased course requirements in the teaching of reading and math."

  "We have added a small secondary cooperative program."

  "Last year we had 15 interns in a bilingual program; present 3 interns."

- Thirty-two (89 per cent) of the institutions with programs this year expect to continue their program next year (1976-77). Twelve of these anticipate "no change" in their program for 1976-77.

- Four California institutions that now have intern programs expect to discontinue them for 1976-77. Explanations offered are as follows:

  "Schools indicate lack of openings."

  "There is no need for this type of program; even regularly prepared teachers are having a tough time getting jobs."

  "No staff available for the kind of program we want."

  "New Ryan* regulations; we probably won't be ready for it."

- Institutions that plan to revise their program in some way for 1976-77 are thinking in these directions (the number of institutions indicating each change is noted in parenthesis):

  Adaptation to Ryan legislation* (Calif.) (5)

  Fewer "slots"; more difficult placements (4)

  Increase in salary (1)

  More flexibility in the type of placement (1)

  Closer working relationships with cooperating teachers (1)

  Continual improvement in the training program of intern supervisors and modification of indicators by which student teachers demonstrate competency (1)

  Interest in a year-long graduate resident program following the internship (1)

  Focus on a role-based teacher education model as an alternative to the development of competencies (1)

  Changing the focus to prepare teachers for bilingual/bicultural classes (1)

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* The Ryan legislation is that which recently created The Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing in California. If this statewide body formally approves the various credential programs of a given institution, students completing one of the approved programs are granted the appropriate credential on the recommendation of the institution. This eliminates the need, at the state level, for a certification bureau to study the transcripts of each credential applicant, counting units and checking off course titles. At the same time it permits Schools of Education some leeway in developing their own unique credential programs.

The Ryan Commission is supportive of the internship model as a means of (1) providing an alternate route to certification, (2) joining theory and practice in a manner which promotes maximum professional growth, and

- Eighty-six institutions, including 60 without intern programs, responded to the questions: "What do you believe is the long-range future and/or potential of internship programs in elementary teacher education (1980 and beyond)?" When the responses were categorized, there was found to be a wide range, from "None," "Bleak," "Nill, "It's a dead issue" to "Great," "Planning to expand," "This is the only way to go." In between these extreme positions, responses suggested the following main themes:

  Not useful in times of teacher "oversupply" and limited financial resources; there will be a teacher shortage again.

  Probably very well suited to special areas and needs (e.g., early childhood education, rural, bilingual-bicultural, inner city, specialist credentials, paraprofessional preparation).

  The internship is just one of a variety of teacher education programs which should be offered. It is needed as a way for post-baccalaureate persons to enter the profession.

  There will be greater school district involvement in planning and implementing (including off-campus centers).

  The institutions currently without such programs tended to comment less favorably about them than did the institutions that do have internship programs.

- Three responses that seem particularly insightful concerning the future of the internship are quoted below:

  "There is a long range future for internship programs if it can be rather clearly established that the unique characteristics and or options which are part of intern programs result in the preparation of more effective, dedicated, or able teachers. I feel there is little future for intern programs as quicker, or cheaper ways for getting teachers certified and into teaching positions."

  A. H. Schelske, Assistant Dean
  School of Education
  St. Cloud State College (Minn.)

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(3) promoting collaboration, communication, and decision making processes among and between all members of the profession.[4]

However, the process of gaining program approval is an arduous one, requiring (1) the formation of an Internship Programs Council constituted from representatives of the teacher preparation institution, the school district administration, the non-management certificated employees, and the target community, and (2) the joint development of an intern program document that details the program according to Commission guidelines. The complexities are compounded when several districts are to be involved with the program.

"Insofar as internship programs provide a means for establishing closer and more substantive relationships between training institutions and school districts, they represent a trend that should be valued and cultivated. However, the present character of internship programs generally does not affect the nature of the relationship between the two. Thus, some re-definition and conceptual planning needs to be completed in order to yield internship programs that are truly supportive of substantive interactions between training institutions and public schools."

Gary D. Fenstermacher, Director
Teacher Education Laboratory
Graduate School of Education
Univ. of California, Los Angeles

"The internship model is appropriate as a field-based model for all teacher preparation programs. It is also possible that school districts may eventually adopt a professional residence program with initial certification similar to that in the medical profession. I believe that the internship model may become the primary model for both preservice and postgraduate training."

Ray Hull, Chairman
Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Oregon

Summary

The internship as a means of preparing teachers dates back to the early 1900s. It has typically been stronger in times of teacher shortage than in times of teacher over-supply such as the present, although many educators through the years have regarded the internship as a most effective means of teacher preparation, regardless of the prevailing supply and demand of teachers.

The purpose of this study was primarily to consider the present and future of the internship in the light of its past.

A questionnaire was mailed to the 67 California institutions that prepare elementary school teachers and 43 selected institutions from other states. A follow-up study was conducted one year later to determine the revisions that were actually occurring.

It was found that intern programs exist in many different forms. They are big and small, old and new. Some are very nearly like student teaching in that the intern works closely with a certificated teacher, has limited teaching responsibility, and minimal salary. Interns in other programs closely resemble the regular beginning teacher, in that they have full teaching responsibility and salary that is commensurate. More or less "automatic placement" is provided in some programs, while in others the intern must compete with credentialed teachers for the teaching position.

One institution offers the internship as the only means to becoming an elementary teacher, whereas in most cases the percentage of interns is very small compared to the total number of credentials granted through the institution.

Few substantial changes seem to be occurring that would suggest trends. Most notable are those related to the over-supply of teachers and in California, to certain requirements of the recent Ryan legislation.

The elementary teaching internship exists in a great number of individual patterns. Although they are regarded by many educators as being of limited value in present times of teacher oversupply, others see in them a most promising means of teacher education.

References

[1] John F. Brown, The Training of Teachers (1911), quoted in Internships in Teacher Education, Forty-seventh Yearbook of The Association for Student Teaching, 1968, p. 1

[2] Frank F. Spaulding, School Superintendent in Action (1955), quoted in Internships in Teacher Education, Forty-seventh Yearbook of the Association for Student Teaching, 1968, p. 3

[3] Internships in Teacher Education, Forty-seventh Yearbook of The Association for Student Teaching, 1968, p. 4

[4] Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing, Manual for Developing, Evaluating, and Approving Professional Preparation: Internship Program Plans (Sacramento, 1974), p. 1

Responding Institutions With Internship Programs (1975-76)

California (16)

California Lutheran College, Thousand Oaks
California State College, Stanislaus, Turlock
California State Poly University, Pomona
California State University, Fresno
California State University, Hayward
California State University, Northridge
Claremont Graduate School, Claremont
College of Notre Dame, Belmont
Pacific College, Fresno
Pacific Union, Angwin
Saint Mary's College, Moraga
San Jose State University, San Jose
University of California, Irvine
University of San Francisco, San Francisco
University of Southern California, Los Angeles
Whittier College, Whittier

States other than California (20)

Central Washington State College, Ellensburg, WA
Idaho State University, Pocatello, ID
Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI
New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM
Northwestern University, Evanston, IL
Oregon College of Education, Monmouth, OR
Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR
Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY
Trenton State College, Trenton, NJ
University of Houston, Houston, TX
University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, CO
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA
University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI
University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI
Washington State University, Pullman, WA
Weber State College, Ogden, UT
Webster College, Webster Grove, MO
Wisconsin State University, Oshkosh, WI