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ABSTRACT

Consistent with education reform, Professional Education Units (PEUs) are engaged in a re-examination of teacher education. This study was conducted by the PEU at Wayne State College (Nebraska) to examine perceptions of readiness for teaching by 74 preservice teachers in their first education course, 81 teacher education students in their student teaching semester, 21 cooperating teachers, and 36 public school administrators. For purposes of investigation, a 20-measure instrument was adapted from the national Research about Teacher Education (RATE) survey. Results indicated that teacher education programs which were directly supported by a PEU knowledge base had positive reactions to the program from all populations. Data suggested that beginning preservice teachers' perceptions were extremely positive and optimistic about teaching, and that student teachers were apprehensive about independently initiating their professional preparation in real school environments. These data were also reinforced by school administrators who had more confidence in the perceived readiness of student teachers than did the student teachers themselves. Fourteen statistical tables are included. Contains six references. (Author/LL)

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An Analysis of Teacher Readiness at a Comprehensive State College Based on National Perceptions.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined preceptions of readiness for teaching by 212 preservice teachers, student teachers, cooperating teachers, and public school administrators. For purposes of investigation a twenty measure instrument was adapted from the national RATE twelve measure instrument. Results indicated that teacher education programs which were directly supported by a Professional Education Unit knowledge base had positive reactions to the program from all populations. Data suggested that beginning preservice teachers' preceptions were extremely positive and optimistic about teaching. On the other hand, student teachers were apprehensive about finally independently initiating their professional preparation in real school environments. These data were also reinforced by school administrators who on select variables had more confidence in the preceived readiness of student teachers that did the student teachers.

AN ANALYSIS OF TEACHER READINESS AT A COMPREHENSIVE STATE COLLEGE BASED ON NATIONAL PERCEPTIONS

Professional Education Units (PEUs) are engaged in a far-reaching re-examination of teacher education stimulated by reform initiatives from within the profession and criticisms from without. In this quest, professional education units must raise questions about the place and form of means and ends in the larger context about the thoughtful preparation of teacher. Recent research and theory in teacher education suggested alternatives to traditional conceptions of the teacher, the learner, and the classroom.

It is important to explore the relationship among teaching, learning, and the occupational structures in which teachers do their work. Parker, Johnson, and Elmore (1990) argued that recent policies implemented to improve the quality of teaching practices by altering career structures were not likely to affect teacher's practices, students' learning, or school organizational patterns. Arguably the restructuring of teachers' career structures is a reactive response by local school districts or state governments. Professional education units, however, possess minimal influence upon such and are responsible for how teachers teach, what teachers know, and diversity of knowledge, skill, ambition, and interests of preservice teachers.

Concern for coherence in teacher education is a value laden concept yet its meaning and application to a professional

education unit is unclear. Buchmann and Floden (1990) suggested that program coherence assumes a tightly connected set of experiences that give teacher education a sufficient power associated with harmony and wholeness. An effective PEU appropriately conveys coherence through its knowledge base. The knowledge base reflects harmony and wholeness through pedagogy and content. Buchmann (1984) described this as "that special amalgam of pedagogy and content where epistemology, ethics, and pedagogy converge into content" (p. 45).

PEUs must additionally concern themselves with inquiry as a solidifier of the knowledge base. Floden and Buchmann (1989) suggested those elements as normative questions, critical examination of assumptions and logic, as well as background knowledge. Teacher education, however, is largely a practical endeavor. It is incumbent upon PEUS to combine the conceptual wholeness of the knowledge base solidified by inquiry with empirical claims of effectiveness.

The most compelling arguments for the PEU effectiveness and the professional education strategies are based on the nature of practice. Kennedy (1989) found that the essence of practice was either the application of technical knowledge or independent thought to enhance the teacher's ability to do one thing well. If PEUs are to be effective they must not assume that these two aspects of practice are mutually exclusive and that by promoting one is not at the expense of the other.

For the past 32 years Wayne State College has been

conducting external ratings of first year teacher education graduates. Not unlike many PEUs, this assessment has had little or no valuative relationship to a knowledge base or the notion of inquiry in teacher education. Rather, this assessment has attempted to focus exclusively on the nature of practice. Those measures of "teacher effectiveness" and most recent mean 5 year values on a 4.0 scale as determined by public school administrators were: (1) punctuality -- 3.47; (2) loyalty and cooperation -- 3.44; (3) extra-curricular attendance -- 3.43; (4) personal grooming -- 3.41; (5) subject matter knowledge -- 3.32; (6) initiativeness and resourcefulness -- 3.22; (7) oral and written language -- 3.18; (8) teacher/pupil relations -- 3.17; and (9) classroom discipline -- 2.84.

Fully realizing that PEU assessment of teacher education cannot be premised solely upon tradition or ambiguous "teacher effectiveness" of recent graduates, Wayne State College responded by adapting the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Research About Teacher Education (RATE) instrument (1988). The researchers increased the 12 item instrument into the 20 item Wayne State College Perceptions of Readiness for Teaching (PRT) instrument. The Wayne State College instrument was regarded as appropriate for two reasons. First, it was coherent with the teacher education knowledge base, solidified by program inquiry, and reflected essence of practice. Second, it was considerate of national trends reflective of program quality in teacher education.

Purpose

Several questions were developed prior to beginning this study. These questions were generated as a result of the examination of the populations assessed, the desire for knowledge about the Wayne State College Teacher Education Program, and the importance of outcome assessments in teacher education. Specifically, these questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of beginning students in teacher education concerning the preparation program they are beginning?
2. What are the perceptions of student teachers regarding the teacher preparation program?
3. What are the perceptions of cooperating teachers regarding the teacher preparation program?
4. What are the perceptions of public school administrators regarding the teacher preparation program?
5. What differences exist among the four groups concerning each of the variables?

Method

Subjects and Setting

A total of 212 subjects participated in the study: 74 teacher education preservice teachers in their first education course; 81 teacher education students in their student teaching semester; 21 cooperating teachers; and 36 public school

administrators of first year graduates of the program participated in the study. The study was conducted at Wayne State College, a comprehensive institution of 3,500 students in the rural region of northeast Nebraska. Wayne State College, begun as a normal school, has recently undergone a transformation into a comprehensive institution.

Instrumentation

The RATE instrument was a national survey of 729 preservice teacher and 153 teacher education faculty in 79 colleges and universities. It consisted of data analysis of teacher education in the areas of: (1) institutions and enrollment; (2) program; (3) faculty; and (4) students. Proportional confidence levels were established at $p < .05$.

The researchers, administrators in the professional education unit, adapted the RATE's 12 item Perceptions of Readiness instrument. The RATE's items were based on national student and faculty perceptions of program quality. The researchers' adaptation retained those qualitative factors as well as added an additional 8 items to accurately assess not only national qualitative indices but also those inherent to Wayne State College's teacher education knowledge base and program.

The researchers' instrument consisted of a 5 point positional scale similar to that of the RATE. The RATE scale was measured by: outstanding; good, better than average; adequate; and less than adequate. The Wayne State College scale was measured by: (5) excellent; (4) very good; (3) good; (2)

mediocre; and (1) poor. It was the researchers' perception that adapted scale measures would render a better understanding of the extreme positional measured responses.

Variables related to readiness for teaching included: (1) evaluating student learning; (2) diagnosing student needs; (3) working well with colleagues; (4) understanding student differences; (5) using educational technology; (6) choosing instructional materials; (7) using instructional materials; (8) developing instructional materials; (9) developing curriculum; (10) handling discipline problems; (11) planning for instruction; (12) managing a classroom; (13) using effective teaching methods; (14) relating to diverse populations; (15) understanding liberal arts; (16) being knowledgeable; (17) delivering instruction; (18) communicating effectively; (19) using motivational techniques; (20) being effective teachers. These 20 topics adequately reflected outcome measures of the teacher education program at Wayne State College. They were also reflective of the knowledge base under which the program operates.

Procedures

The PRT was administered to the subjects during the 1989-90 academic year. All responses were anonymous to insure accuracy and integrity of the data. Preservice teachers and student teachers were assessed either in a class or during a student teaching seminar. As a result, there was a 100% response rate for these populations. Public school administrators were assessed through the mail and had a 73% response rate.

Analysis of the Data

The data were collected through classrooms and the mail. The first stage in the data analysis was the computation of descriptive statistics. Tables 1 through 5 present means and standard deviations for the 20 topics and the five different groups. An examination of these tables revealed strongly positive results in most variables.

[insert tables 1 - 4 about here]

Analysis of the Data

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to determine any significant differences between and within the groups. In computing the ANOVA a significance level of .01 was selected and the Scheffe' procedure (also with a .01 level of significance) was selected for the post hoc analysis.

Even though the examination of the descriptive statistics appeared to reveal some differences between the groups, no significant differences were found between groups in several variables: Understanding Student Differences ($F = 2.33$, $p. > .01$); Handling Discipline Problems ($F = 3.01$, $p. > .01$); Being Knowledgeable ($F = 3.57$; $p. > .01$); Communicating Effectively ($F = 2.92$, $p. > .01$); and Being Effective Teachers ($F = 3.84$; $p. > .01$). As a result no further analysis was conducted on these data.

Significant F ratios were found between groups in several variables; however, no significant differences between groups were found upon the application of the Scheffe' procedure. These

variables included: Evaluating Student Learning ($F = 5.84$, $p. < .01$, $df = 3, 209$); Using Instructional Materials ($F = 4.10$, $p. < .01$, $df = 3, 209$); Planning for Instruction ($F = 4.79$, $p. < .01$, $df = 3, 209$); Delivering Instruction ($F = 4.29$, $p. < .01$, $df = 3, 209$); and Using Motivational Techniques ($F = 5.37$, $p. < .01$, $df = 3, 209$). The variance in these instances was accounted for by differences within the groups. This was not of interest to the researchers; therefore, no further analysis was conducted on these data.

Significant differences between the groups were found in several variables. These variables included: Diagnosing Student Needs; Working Well With Colleagues; Using Educational Technology; Choosing Instructional Materials; Developing Instructional Materials; Developing Curriculum; Managing a Classroom; Using Effective Teaching Methods; Relating To Diverse Populations; and Understanding Liberal Arts. Tables 5 through 14 present these statistics.

[insert tables 5 - 14 about here]

Discussion

The results from this research indicated that many of the persons involved in teacher education as either beginners or as completers have positive reactions to the program. Much like the RATE work at a national level, this research puts the Teacher Education Program at Wayne State College in a very strong

regional position. If one operated with the assumption that the important components of the knowledge base for teacher education in a rural institution of higher education should include the 20 elements which were listed as variables for this study, then one must recognize that as outcome measures a knowledge base was being implemented in practice by the graduates.

The differences between the groups indicated that in 10 instances the student teachers rated readiness for teaching significantly lower than other groups. This could easily have been attributable to the fact that these persons were in the process of beginning their professional application of knowledge. As such, they entered the final phase of preparation with a great deal of trepidation and fear. Their own inadequacies for teaching were likely beginning to impact them. Importantly, the other groups most concerned with outcomes, administrators and cooperating teachers, viewed the products of the teacher education program in much more positive lights.

The preservice students enrolled in the Introduction to Teaching classes showed extremely positive reactions to the variables. This could have been attributable to their lack of experience in the schools and lack of experiences with various methods and other preparatory classes. It may also have been their initial optimism, excitement, and exuberance overy their selected professional career.

As a measure of the knowledge base for teacher education at Wayne State College, this study supported the continuance of the

practices currently in use. This study also pointed out the inadequcy of previous measures of outcomes.

The AACTE RATE study included measures of faculty perceptions. As a follow up to the present study faculty perceptions are currently being assessed by the researchers. It is anticipated that those perceptions will be consistent with those previously reported in the RATE study.

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Table 1 Beginning Preservice Teachers Means and Standard Deviations

	Variable	Mean	SD
1	Evaluating student learning	3.689	.72
2	Diagnosing student needs	3.622	.85
3	Working well with colleagues	3.824	.72
4	Understanding student differences	3.575	.76
5	Using educational technology	3.865	.78
6	Choosing instructional materials	3.784	.76
7	Using instructional materials	3.703	.88
8	Developing instructional materials	3.685	.74
9	Developing curriculum	3.851	.71
10	Handling discipline problems	3.703	.88
11	Planning for instruction	4.000	.70
12	Managing a classroom	4.176	.78
13	Using effective teaching methods	4.108	.73
14	Relating to diverse populations	3.635	.75
15	Understanding liberal arts	3.743	.74
16	Being knowledgeable	4.257	.66
17	Delivering instruction	4.014	.69
18	Communicating effectively	4.027	.72
19	Using motivational techniques	3.784	.79
20	Being effective teachers	4.122	.72

N = 74

Table 2 Student teachers means and standard deviations

	Variable	Mean	SD
1	Evaluating student learning	3.370	.89
2	Diagnosing student needs	3.062	.99
3	Working well with colleagues	3.532	.89
4	Understanding student differences	3.407	1.02
5	Using educational technology	3.432	.84
6	Choosing instructional materials	3.325	1.02
7	Using instructional materials	3.531	.88
8	Developing instructional materials	3.457	.88
9	Developing curriculum	3.025	1.06
10	Handling discipline problems	3.333	1.10
11	Planning for instruction	3.680	.91
12	Managing a classroom	3.333	.88
13	Using effective teaching methods	3.531	1.00
14	Relating to diverse populations	2.951	.93
15	Understanding liberal arts	3.025	.94
16	Being knowledgeable	3.877	.84
17	Delivering instruction	3.688	.82
18	Communicating effectively	3.691	.92
19	Using motivational techniques	3.420	1.00
20	Being effective teachers	3.737	.88

N=81

Table 3 Cooperating teachers means and standard deviations

	Variable	Mean	SD
1	Evaluating student learning	3.900	.79
2	Diagnosing student needs	3.524	.68
3	Working well with colleagues	4.048	.81
4	Understanding student differences	3.762	.83
5	Using educational technology	4.238	.83
6	Choosing instructional materials	4.100	.72
7	Using instructional materials	4.000	.89
8	Developing instructional materials	4.150	.59
9	Developing curriculum	3.350	1.18
10	Handling discipline problems	3.250	.64
11	Planning for instruction	4.250	.64
12	Managing a classroom	3.600	.75
13	Using effective teaching methods	3.952	.74
14	Relating to diverse populations	3.333	.59
15	Understanding liberal arts	3.684	.82
16	Being knowledgeable	4.048	.67
17	Delivering instruction	4.100	.55
18	Communicating effectively	4.000	.55
19	Using motivational techniques	3.952	.81
20	Being effective teachers	3.952	.74

N= 21

Table 4 Administrators of First Year Teachers Means and Standard Deviations

	Variable	Mean	SD
1	Evaluating student learning	3.892	.61
2	Diagnosing student needs	3.676	.75
3	Working well with colleagues	4.243	.72
4	Understanding student differences	3.750	.81
5	Using educational technology	3.778	.59
6	Choosing instructional materials	3.889	.67
7	Using instructional materials	4.056	.72
8	Developing instructional materials	3.883	.74
9	Developing curriculum	3.714	.71
10	Handling discipline problems	3.757	.83
11	Planning for instruction	4.108	.61
12	Managing a classroom	3.838	.83
13	Using effective teaching methods	4.027	.73
14	Relating to diverse populations	3.743	.74
15	Understanding liberal arts	3.824	.72
16	Being knowledgeable	4.000	.67
17	Delivering instruction	4.027	.69
18	Communicating effectively	4.000	.71
19	Using motivational techniques	4.000	.85
20	Being effective teachers	4.135	.71

N = 36

Table 5 Diagnosing Student Needs

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	17.01	5.67	7.41	.001
Within groups	209	164.50	.765		
Total	212	181.51			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 6 Working Well With Colleagues

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	14.94	4.98	7.86	.001
Within groups	209	135.05	.634		
Total	212	149.99			

Significant Differences:

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 7 Using Educational Technology

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	13.33	4.44	7.16	.001
Within groups	209	132.15	.618		
Total	212	145.49			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 8 Choosing Instructional Materials

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	17.36	5.79	8.06	.001
Within groups	209	152.30	.718		
Total	212	169.66			

Significant Differences:

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 9 Developing Instructional Materials

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	8.96	2.99	4.77	.003
Within groups	209	132.70	.626		
Total	212	141.66			

Significant Differences:

Cooperating Teachers > Student Teachers

Table 10 Developing Curriculum

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	28.93	9.64	11.68	.001
Within groups	209	174.96	.825		
Total	212	203.88			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 11 Managing a Classroom

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	27.99	9.32	13.71	.001
Within groups	209	145.63	.681		
Total	212	173.61			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Table 12 Using Effective Teaching Methods

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	14.88	4.96	7.00	.001
Within groups	209	152.28	.708		
Total	212	167.16			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Table 13 Relating to Diverse Populations

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	24.32	8.11	12.01	.001
Within groups	209	141.12	.675		
Total	212	165.44			

Significant Differences:

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Administrators > Student Teachers

Table 14 Understanding Liberal Arts

Source	df	SS	MS	F	Prob
Between groups	3	27.37	9.12	13.49	.001
Within groups	209	142.05	.676		
Total	212	169.43			

Significant Differences:

Cooperating Teachers > Student Teachers

Intro to Teaching > Student Teachers

Administrators > Student Teachers