DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 439 129 SP 039 088

AUTHOR Godt, Pamela Terry; Benelli, Cecelia; Kline, Rhonda

TITLE Do Preservice Teachers Given "Early Field Experiences" and "Integrated Methods Courses" Do Better Than Students in the Traditional Teacher Education Program? (A Longitudinal Plan To Evaluate a University's Redesign of Its Teacher Education Program).

PUB DATE 2000-02-27

NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (52nd, Chicago, IL, February 26-29, 2000).

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; *Integrated Curriculum; Methods Courses; *Preservice Teacher Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Student Teachers; Student Teaching; Teacher Competencies; Teaching Methods; Teaching Skills

IDENTIFIERS *Early Field Experience; Western Illinois University

ABSTRACT

Western Illinois University's College of Education and Human Services is redesigning its undergraduate teacher education program. The program places volunteer freshmen in real classrooms for long-term observations and volunteer assistance, eventually leading up to a full range of teaching opportunities. Also, coursework is presented in an integrated fashion. Four cohorts of students have already begun participating in the new program, while the rest of the students remain in the traditional teacher education program. Assessment of the new program includes monitoring of coursework performance, certification tests, portfolios, philosophy of education statements, beliefs about teaching, and fieldwork experiences. Data on student demographics and grade point average are also being collected. The longitudinal evaluation will see whether presenting earlier, sustained incremental field experiences will result in improved teaching expertise and performance, and whether providing integrated coursework in a combined methods block, combined with integrated field experiences, will result in more effective presentations of integrated lessons by preservice teachers during their coursework and after graduation. Data collection will span 4 years, monitoring students in the new and traditional programs. Already, data show several academic and demographic differences between the groups, as well as differences between the groups on teacher beliefs. (SM)

DO PRESERVICE TEACHERS GIVEN *EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCES* AND *INTEGRATED METHODS COURSES* DO BETTER THAN STUDENTS IN THE TRADITIONAL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM?

(A Longitudinal Plan to Evaluate a University's Redesign of its Teacher Education Program.)

Dr. Pamela Terry Godt, & Dr. Cecelia Benelli,
Department of Curriculum & Instruction
&
Ms. Rhonda Kline, Asst. Director of
Institutional Research & Planning

WESTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
MACOMB, ILLINOIS
(Phone: 309-298-1961)

AACTE CONFERENCE,
CHICAGO, IL

FEBRUARY 27, 2000

Do Preservice Teachers Given Early Field Experiences and Integrated Methods Courses do Better than Students in the Traditional Teacher Education Program?
(A longitudinal plan to evaluate a university's redesign of its teacher education program)

by
Pamela Terry Godt, Cecelia Benelli, & Rhonda Kline
Western Illinois University

Statement of the problem

Western Illinois University's College of Education & Human Services is redesigning its Teacher Education Program for undergraduates working toward a degree and certification in teacher education. Beginning their freshman year, the new program places education students in real classrooms for long-term observations and volunteer assistance, eventually leading up to a full range of teaching opportunities and responsibilities. Students will spend over 360 hours in the field prior to their student teaching experience. In addition, their coursework is presented in an integrated fashion, combining the separate subject matters of reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies into method blocks with applications in real classrooms.

Four cohorts of students have already started participating in the new program, while the rest of the students remain in the traditional teacher education program. This allows us a unique opportunity to collect data comparing the two programs. In order to closely monitor any changes in student outcomes, a careful assessment of student performance is already taking place, covering such diverse areas as performance on coursework, certification tests, portfolios, philosophy of education statements, beliefs about teaching, and field-work experiences. These varied types of measures are being gathered for comparison to comparable students still participating in the traditional educational program, which provides only minimal field experiences until the Junior year and separate courses taught by subject-matter specialists.

Literature Review:

The teacher education program review team did a thorough search of the literature on teacher preparation programs, and gathered a huge file of readings. However, none of the other programs fit our particular needs. Various components were gathered from a wide variety of sources, including literature from American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) publications, the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), and from sources such as the National Center for Restructuring, Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST). Some of the main literature involved in creating this new program evaluation is the usage of standards-based methods of evaluation. The standards being used include those specified by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), Illinois Professional Teaching standards (INTASC-based), national subject matter standards (reading, math, science, social studies, etc.) and the Illinois Learning Standards for each subject area. In addition to reviewing other known redesign programs for teacher education, the staff went on several site visits to other programs that had a reputation for following "best practices." Interestingly enough, on some of the site visits, it was more useful to notice problem areas to avoid in our own program redesign, than to note practices to emulate. This provided us with some very important information relevant to our own redesign plans.

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Contribution of this work to the knowledge base:
Both formal presentations and informal contacts regarding our assessment process have indicated a high level of interest by other teacher educators in this topic. The major outcome of value to the education field resulting from this evaluation project is the collection of hard data verifying teacher competencies and expertise in authentic classroom situations, which are aligned with state and national standards.

This presentation will detail the plan for longitudinal assessment of students entering these two types of teacher education programs as they continue on their way to become full-fledged teachers. The traditional teacher education program at our institution is very strong and has consistently received positive reviews from the many school administrators in our own and several nearby states who later hire our graduates. However, both the elementary education department and the college of education are being proactive in trying to make an outstanding teacher education program even better. To this end, this longitudinal evaluation is being carried out to:

> **1)** see if presenting earlier, sustained, incremental field experiences to students results in improved teaching expertise and performance as they gain more experience directly tied to the classroom, and
> **2)** examine whether providing integrated coursework in a combined "methods block" combined with integrated field experiences, rather than providing separate courses in such areas as reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies, results in more effective presentations of integrated lessons by the preservice teachers during their coursework and at/after graduation.

The researchers will present plans for data collection and analysis over the next four years, as well as report on the results of the first few years of data gathered from the initial pilot group cohorts of students and their randomly drawn control group counterparts who began their teacher education program at the same time. We are currently following 19 elementary education majors who entered the pilot program in the Fall of 1997 (Cohort 1) and their control group 1, consisting of 20 freshman who entered the program at the same time as those in the pilot program. The second group we are tracking consists of 17 students who entered the redesigned teacher education program in the Spring of 1998 (Cohort 2), along with their control group 2, consisting of 21 elementary education majors who began their education program at the same time as the cohort 2 group. The third group of students we are tracking (Cohort 3) consists of 24 students who entered the redesigned teacher education program in the Spring of 1999, along with their control group 3, consisting of 51 elementary education majors who began their education program at the same time as the cohort 3 group. The fourth and most recent group of students we are tracking (Cohort 4) consists of 35 students who entered the redesigned teacher education program this spring of 2000, along with their control group 4, consisting of 50 elementary education majors who began their educational program at the same time as the cohort 4 students. We will be tracking the progress of both the cohort and control groups of students as they continue in their educational studies. In addition, we will present summary comments to open-ended questions evaluating the students' early field-based classroom experiences which were gathered from the students in the pilot cohort groups.
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Conclusions:

As we redesign teacher education programs based on national accreditation standards, state teaching standards, and student learning standards, accountability demands that we document the effectiveness of our redesign efforts. Therefore, we want to share our research findings with others doing similar changes in teacher education programs.

Assessment tools used to gather and assess our preservice teachers' abilities at different points during the teacher education program consist of the following:

1) **Demographic information** gathered from the students' applications.
2) **High school percentile rank**;
3) **ACT scores;**
4) **Cumulative GPA in college**.

In addition, we also assess preservice teachers' performance on the following additional measures:

5) **preliminary certification pretest** scores related to the State Certification Testing System; (We will also have their scores on the actual teacher certification test when they finally take it.)
6) Scores on a written **Philosophy of Education** statement, given at three points in time--start of the program, midpoint, and at the end of student teaching, and;
7) Scores on a **Teacher Belief Inventory**(pre & post);
8) An assessment of their **lesson-planning skills** in creating a written outline of key planning components for a three-week **integrated learning experience** addressing the diverse needs of learners.

Our main focus during these first years of data collection is more on formative assessment than summative evaluation. Our initial findings, however, do indicate that the students in the redesign groups are doing at least as well as, and in some cases, are doing significantly better than, our students still in the traditional teacher education program.

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	96-97	1997-98		1998-99		1999-00		2000-01		2001-02		2002-03	
		Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Cohort I	Frosh.	Sophomore Year 20 hours Field Exp. 30 hours Field Exp.		Junior Year 85 hours Field Exp. 66 hours Field Exp. Integ. Methods Block		Senior Year 180 hours Field Exp. Student Teaching							
Cohort II		Freshman Year ---- ---- 20 hours Field Exp.		Sophomore Year 10 hours Field Exp. 10 hours Field Exp.		Junior Year 102 hrs Field Exp. 100 hrs Field Exp. Integ. Methods Block		Senior Year 180 hours Field Exp. Student Teaching					
Cohort III				Freshman Year ---- ---- 10 hours Field Exp.		Sophomore Year 10 hours Field Exp. 10 hours Field Exp.		Junior Year ---- ---- 100 hrs Field Exp. Integ. Methods Block		Senior Year 180 hours Field Exp. Student Teaching			
Cohort IV						Freshman Year		Sophomore Year 10 hours Virtual Observation 20 hours Field Exp.		Junior Year ---- ---- 100 hrs Field Exp. Integ. Methods Block		Senior Year 180 hours Field Exp. Student Teaching	

TEACHER CERTIFICATION AND PRE-CERTIFICATION TEST SCORES

TEACHER PRE-CERTIFICATION TEST SCORES

	Average	
Cohort 1 (N=4)	X=59.03 %	(Taken as Sophomores; They are now Seniors)
Control 1 (N=4)	X=62.5 %	" " " " " "
Cohort 2 (N=17)	X=53.76 %	(Taken as Freshmen; They are now Juniors)
Control 2 (N=15)	X=53.33 %	" " " " "
Cohort 3 (N=28)	X=55.36 %	(Taken as Freshmen; They are now Sophomores)
Control 3 (N=54)	X=53.00 %	" " " " " "
Cohort 4 (N=33)	X=52.5 %	(Taken as Freshmen; They are still Freshmen)
Control 4 (N=53)	X=55.13 %	" " " " " "

TEACHER CERTIFICATION TEST SCORES

Cohort 1 (N=13)	X=82 %	(Taken as Seniors July 99, Oct 99, or Jan 2000)
Control 1 (N=5)	X=85.6 %	" " " " " "

The State of Illinois average score ranged from 80% to 82%, depending of the date of testing. (Passing score was 70 or above. So far, all students in both Cohort 1 and Control Group 1 who have taken the Teacher Certification Test have passed it.)

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PHILOSOPHY of EDUCATION SCORES (gathered 1999-2000)

	(Freshmen)		(Juniors)	
Category:	Cohort 3	Control 3	Cohort 2	Control 2
Purposes of Education	(N=20)	(N=16)	(N=16)	(N=8)
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=1.45	X=1.0	X=2.4	X=2.5
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=1.75	X=1.31	X=2.3	X=2.1
Children's **Needs**				
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=1.8	X=1.44	X=2.7	X=2.1
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=1.88	X=1.81	X=2.5	X=2.0
Learning **Environment**				
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=2.03	X=1.94	X=2.5	X=2.1
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=1.83	X=2.0	X=2.4	X=1.7
Curriculum				
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=1.58	X=1.47	X=2.12	X=1.8
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=1.95	X=1.84	X=2.4	X=1.9
Effective **Teachers**				
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=2.48	X=2.38	X=3.81	X=2.8
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=2.23	X=2.16	X=2.5	X=2.1
Families/Communities				
Quantity of ideas mentioned	X=2.43	X=2.22	X=2.44	X=2.4
Significance of ideas mentioned	X=2.15	X=1.94	X=2.31	X=2.1
TOTALS:				
Quantity mean scores:	X=1.96	X=1.74	X=2.6	X=2.28

One-tailed t-tests comparing:

Cohort 3 vs Control 3= ($p < 0.11$ NS) Cohort 2 vs Control2= ($p < 0.18$ NS)

Significance of ideas mean scores: X=1.96 X=1.85 X=2.35 X=2.01

One-tailed t-test comparing:

Cohort 3 vs Control 3= ($p < 0.16$ NS) Cohort 2 vs Control2= ($p < 0.06$ NS)

(Note: This comparison of Cohort 2 vs. Control 2 (Juniors) is very **close** to reaching significance at the $p < .05$ level. The students in the redesigned program had higher scores on 11/12 items.)

When comparing the Cohort 2 (Juniors) who were involved in the redesigned teacher education program vs. the Control 3 (Freshmen) scores, the students at the Junior level did highly significantly better than the freshman for both number and significance of the ideas listed in their Philosophy statements, indicating that the students did make highly significant improvements in both the quantity and quality of their ideas mentioned in their Philosophy of Education statements: Junior Cohort group vs. Freshman Control group

Quantity: $p < 0.0002$** and ***Significance*** of ideas: $p < 0.0003$**

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Selection of Redesign and Control Cohorts For Teacher Education Redesign Program

Redesign Cohort Selection

The teacher education redesign cohorts were selected on a volunteer basis. All redesign cohorts entered the University as new freshmen majoring in Elementary Education, and typically began their redesign program in the second semester of their freshmen year. Currently there are three redesign cohorts with a fourth cohort beginning Spring 2000 semester. All Elementary Education majors entering the University Fall 2000 will enter the redesign program.

There were 20 students originally enrolled Fall 1997 in the first redesign cohort, with 19 of these students currently enrolled. This cohort began their redesign program later than subsequent redesign cohorts, as first semester sophomores.

The second redesign cohort initially consisted of 26 students enrolled in Spring 1998, with 17 of these students currently enrolled in the program. These students enrolled in the program as second semester freshmen.

The third redesign cohort consisted of 34 students enrolled Spring 1999, with 24 of these students currently enrolled. These students also enrolled in the program as second semester freshmen.

The redesign cohort beginning Spring 2000, cohort four, consists of 35 students enrolled. These students are currently second semester freshmen.

Control Cohort Selection

Control cohorts were selected for comparison purposes with the redesign cohorts. The control cohorts included new freshmen that entered the University as Elementary Education majors at the same time as their respective redesign cohorts. These control cohorts are enrolled in the traditional teacher education program. The control cohorts were adjusted to represent the same proportion of specially admitted students as were represented in the redesign groups. Students majoring in the Early Childhood option of the Elementary Education program were excluded from the control cohorts. Control cohorts have been selected to reflect the academic characteristics of the redesign groups as closely as possible.

There were 41 students originally enrolled in the first control cohort, with 20 students currently enrolled. The second control cohort originally totaled 58 students, with 21 of these students currently enrolled. These two control cohorts have experienced a higher rate of attrition than that of the first two redesign groups.

Control cohort 3 enrolled 68 students last spring, and 51 are currently enrolled. Control cohort 4, in its first semester of the redesign program, is enrolling 50 students.

Demographic and Academic Comparisons

The demographic and academic variables revealed several differences between the redesign and control cohorts. A higher proportion of the total control students are minorities compared to the total redesign students (9.1% vs. 4.2%). A much greater proportion of the control students were from Cook County (24.6%) compared to the total redesign students (13.7%). The grade point average (GPA) is currently higher for the total redesign students than the control students (3.259 vs. 2.984). Composite ACT scores were higher for the redesign students (21.4) compared to the control students (21.1). High school percentile was also higher for the redesign students (66.7), compared to 62.9 for the control students.

The following sections compare differences between the four redesign and control groups.

Cohort I.

The first cohort of redesign and control students (Cohort 1) are currently seniors. They entered the University Fall 1996.

Comparisons between the redesign students and the control students show that a higher proportion of the control students were from Cook county (35.0%) compared to the redesign students (5.3%). Almost 80 percent of the redesign students received semester honors during their most recent semester enrolled compared to 35 percent of the control students. A student must earn a GPA of 3.6 or higher to receive semester honors. The grade point averages for the redesign group is currently 3.538, while the grade point average for the control group is 3.120. The composite ACT score was slightly higher for the control students (22.4) than the redesign students (22.0). High school percentile was approximately 70% for both groups.

Cohort II.

The second cohort of redesign and control students (Cohort II) are primarily juniors. They entered the University Fall 1997.

Almost one-half of the control students are from Suburban Chicago, compared to only 17.6 percent of the redesign students. Almost 53 percent of the redesign students earned semester honors during their most recent semester enrolled compared to 28.6 percent of the control students. Composite ACT scores between the two groups are very close, 21.2 for the redesign students, and 21.4 for the control students. The redesign students reported a higher high school percentile (66.5%), compared to the control group (60.9%). GPA's for both groups were slightly higher than the 3.000 average.

Cohort III.

The third cohort of students (Cohort 3) are currently sophomores. They entered the University Fall 1998.

Almost 30 percent of the redesign students earned semester honors compared to only 8 percent of the control students. Composite ACT scores for the redesign students totaled 21.9 compared to 20.0 for the control students. High school percentile was higher for the redesign students (68.1%) compared to the control students (63.3), and grade point average was also higher for the redesign students (3.176) compared to the control students (2.819).

Cohort IV.

Cohort 4 entered the University Fall 1999 semester and are currently second semester freshmen.

A much higher proportion of the control students reported they were from Cook County (22.0%), compared to the redesign students (8.6%). Almost 9 percent of the redesign students are currently on academic warning, with only 5.7 percent of this group receiving semester honors. This compares to 18.0 percent of the control group receiving semester honors for their last semester enrolled. The composite ACT scores is also higher for the control students (21.7) than the redesign students (20.9). High school percentile is higher for the redesign students (64.2%) compared to the control students (60.3%). GPA's are currently higher for the control students (2.967) compared to the redesign students (2.854).

Teacher Belief Inventory

A Teacher Belief Inventory questionnaire has been administered to the redesign and control groups over the past year. This Inventory consists of 57 items and a four point scale asking the students to "strongly disagree" (1) through "strongly agree" (4) with items relating to beliefs about teaching. Overall, there were very few items that displayed statistical significance among and between the redesign and control cohorts. From the 57 items, thirteen items that were related to the goals of the University's teacher education program were chosen for closer analyses. Among these thirteen items, three showed statistical significance between the groups. These iems are displayed on the following page.

Selected Teacher Belief Inventory Items for Redesign and Control Cohorts entering the University Fall 1996 through Fall 1999

	Redesign Cohorts 1 & 2	Control Cohorts 1 & 2	Redesign Cohorts 3 & 4	Control Cohorts 3 & 4	F Ratio	Prob.
Questions where we expect agreement Score of 3 "Agree" or 4 "Strongly Agree"	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean		
1. Parents would have the right to visit my classroom at any time if they gave me prior notice.	3.7692	3.9348	3.3947	3.6087	4.9536	.0025
2. Learners should have some choice in the selection of classroom assignments.	2.8205	2.7609	2.2105	2.6522	5.6985	.0009
3. I would give learners some options for deciding what to study.	3.1538	3.0000	2.8421	3.0290	1.5312	.2708
4. One of the most important tasks I would face as a teacher is developing individuals into a good working group.	3.2368	3.1957	3.2632	3.0725	.7377	.5308
5. People learn better when cooperating than when competing with one another.	3.4737	3.6304	3.5526	3.5072	.4580	.7120
6. Because people learn a great deal from their mistakes, I would allow learners to learn by trial and error.	3.1842	3.3478	3.2632	3.3043	.6548	.5809
7. I would serve more as a group facilitator than as a transmitter of information.	2.9211	2.9565	2.8684	2.8986	.1019	.9588
Questions where we expect disagreement Score of 1 "Strongly disagree" or 2 "Disagree"						
1. As a teacher I would rely heavily on the textbook and prepackaged materials, rather than trying to write and design my own.	2.1282	2.0217	2.0526	1.9420	.5802	.6287
2. One of the main problems in classrooms today is diversity among pupils.	2.0256	1.8696	1.9737	1.8261	.4367	.7270
3. In the elementary grades, instruction in the three R's should take up most of the school day. Other subject areas (e.g., science, social studies) should be given less emphasis in the curriculum.	1.8421	1.7391	1.9211	1.8406	.3801	.7674
4. I would emphasize teaching the three R's more than the skills of problem solving.	2.2105	2.0000	1.9211	1.8971	1.9035	.1305
5. It would be important to me to divide the school day into clearly designated times for different subject areas.	3.3947	3.0000	3.2895	3.1324	1.7716	.1541
6. I would teach the knowledge of different subject areas separately, because important knowledge is overlooked when subjects are integrated.	2.2368	2.2889	2.5263	2.6765	2.7609	.0435

SOURCE: This inventory was adapted from an instrument developed by Zither and Dabchick at the University of Wisconsin-Madison from Posner, G. (1996). Field Experience. White Plains, NY: Legman Publishers.

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